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editor's letter

Ground cover and lawns are sometimes seen as fairly ho-hum elements of a garden yet, if executed well, can greatly enhance a space, provide a wonderful foil for other more dramatic effects and also be remarkable in their own right. In this issue, we provide, I hope, lots of insights and interesting ideas for both. Chris Marchant, the highly accomplished plantswoman and owner of Orchard Dene Nursery in Oxfordshire (the wholesale supplier of choice for many leading designers) shares the secrets of successful ground cover, suggesting clever ways to combine plants so they look beautiful and help minimise weeds; the information she provides on the plants' vigour is particularly helpful. There's nothing quite like a swathe of velvety lawn, primped and preened to perfection. Once the preserve of the landed gentry, lawns are now one of the most ubiquitous garden elements, yet interestingly are still perceived as something of a status symbol. Gardener Rory Dusoir traces their history and showcases some of the finest examples. Shaped as anything from a dinky bunny rabbit to a giant tea pot, topiary has long been used to provide a sculptural dimension to a garden, yet new forms and new plants are still being explored, as designer Annie Guilfoyle finds out. We also take a look at the work of Stephen Pettifer whose Coade stone sculptures are utterly remarkable; but which would no doubt be enhanced by an immaculate lawn or neatly clipped hedge to set them off. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet

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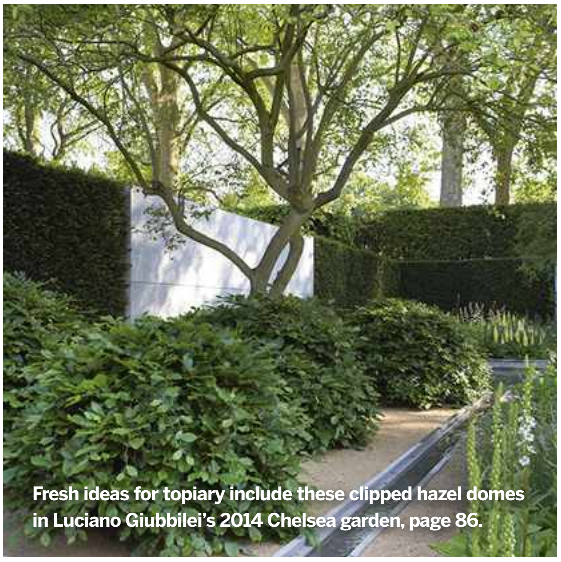

Fresh ideas for topiary include these clipped hazel domes in Luciano Giubbilei's 2014 Chelsea garden, page 86.

Coade stone sculptor Stephen Pettifer adds some fine detail to his latest statue, page 64.

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Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.

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GAP PHOTOS/MATT ANKER - DESIGNER: LUCIANO GIUBBILEI. SPONSOR: CHAMPAGNE LAURENT-PERRIER; ANDREW MONTGOMERY

contents

MARCH 2015

ON THE COVER

Spring planting pages 22, 34, 58

Design ideas for a small garden page 76

Ground cover page 48

Topiary page 86

COVER IMAGE

Woolbeding Gardens, West Sussex
Photography by **Claire Takacs**

Plants

22 **Plantsman's favourites** Hans Kramer, co-owner of the highly respected Dutch nursery De Hessenhof, selects his favourite plants for March

42 **Joys of spring** Gardener Matthew Reese creates three beautiful displays to show off your containers to great effect

48 **Plant profile: ground cover** Good ground cover doesn't need to be boring, it can be a beautiful way to unify your garden and suppress weeds. The key, as expert Chris Marchant explains, is working out which plants combine best

70 **The Great British lawn** How our love affair with grass helped to shape a nation's gardens

Places

34 **Life story** Stewart Grimshaw and his late partner, Simon Sainsbury, spent 40 years creating the glorious garden at Woolbeding, now in the hands of the National Trust

58 **Labour of love** Monique and Thierry Dronet felled forests and moved mountains of earth to create their stunning garden in the Vosges mountains of eastern France. In spring it is a living testament to their love of daffodils

76 **Three thinking** By using clever design ideas and a subtle green palette, Dutch designer Carolien Barkman has transformed an awkward, city garden, made up of three visually disconnected areas, into a restful and cohesive space

People

56 **Who's who** Mick Evans, the head gardener at Packwood House in Warwickshire, who has replanted the garden's borders with mathematical precision and stunning creativity

MAAYKE DE RIDDER; NIALL McDIARMID / ALAMY

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64 **Pride of place** Sculptor Stephen Pettifer has rediscovered the art of creating Coade stone, out of which he crafts originals, reproductions and restoration work in exquisite detail

114 **Border crossing** Frank Ronan realises that leading a transatlantic lifestyle will leave him with little room for procrastination

Design

81 **Design update** The latest projects and events, including the second Hokkaido Garden Show, new parks for Birmingham and San Francisco and a chance to learn green woodworking skills

86 **Design ideas: thinking outside the box** If topiary conjures up images of elaborately pruned box hedges or lollipop-shaped bay trees, now is the time to think again

93 **Design sourcebook** Make light work of spring pruning with our choice of cutting tools

ANDREW MONTGOMERY; SABRINA ROTHE

Regulars

3 **Editor's letter**

6 **Contributors**

13 **Dig in** What's happening this month, including Open Days at Pentillie Castle, the *Art of Gardens* at Buckingham Palace, and new red bidens

19 **Get kitted out** For seed sowing

27 **Gardener cook** Jojo Tulloh is planning to add some spice to her life with a crop of Indian veg

31 **Gardening talent** Lily of the valley was the first plant love for freelance gardener Janet Hague

32 **Subscription offer** Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition

97 **Books** New books for gardeners, including *First Ladies of Gardening* by Heidi Howcroft

102 **Crossword and how to buy back issues**

104 **Classifieds**

113 **Next issue** What's coming up in April

EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Don't miss your chance to book tickets for the first **GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival** – see page 8
- Join us at our **talk in May** with Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price – see page 10
- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition – see page 32
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contributors

CLAIRE MASSET

Claire lives in rural Oxfordshire, where she tends an unruly cottage garden and small veg plot. She is the National Trust's guidebook publisher and is currently working on the new guide to Packwood. On page 56 she interviews its talented head gardener Mick Evans.

"Mick is an inspired gardener with an artist's eye and Packwood brilliantly showcases his mastery of orchestral planting."

ANDY HAMILTON

Andy is a forager, author and brewer who lives on a steep hill overlooking Bristol. Normally, he ventures far and wide searching for plants to forage but after reviewing Adele Nozedar's new book, *The Garden Forager*, for us on page 99 he finds he is tempted to stay on his hill.

"Before heading out into the wilderness, first get to know what you have in your own back yard."

CHRIS MARCHANT

Chris co-founded Orchard Dene Nurseries 25 years ago, and now supplies an extensive range of perennials to leading garden designers. On page 48 she shares the advice she normally gives to clients on using ground-cover plants to help transform outdoor spaces.

"Ground cover can evoke an image of something dull and dreary, but only when imagination and resources are low."

ROSANNA MORRIS

Rosanna writes regularly about travel, art, design and interiors. She's based in Somerset and when she's not scribbling notes or typing at a computer, she's out in the countryside walking her English pointer Flossie. She visits the Wiltshire studio of sculptor Stephen Pettifer on page 64.

"I was bowled over by the time and dedication Stephen puts into his work, which is remarkable. His talents know no bounds."

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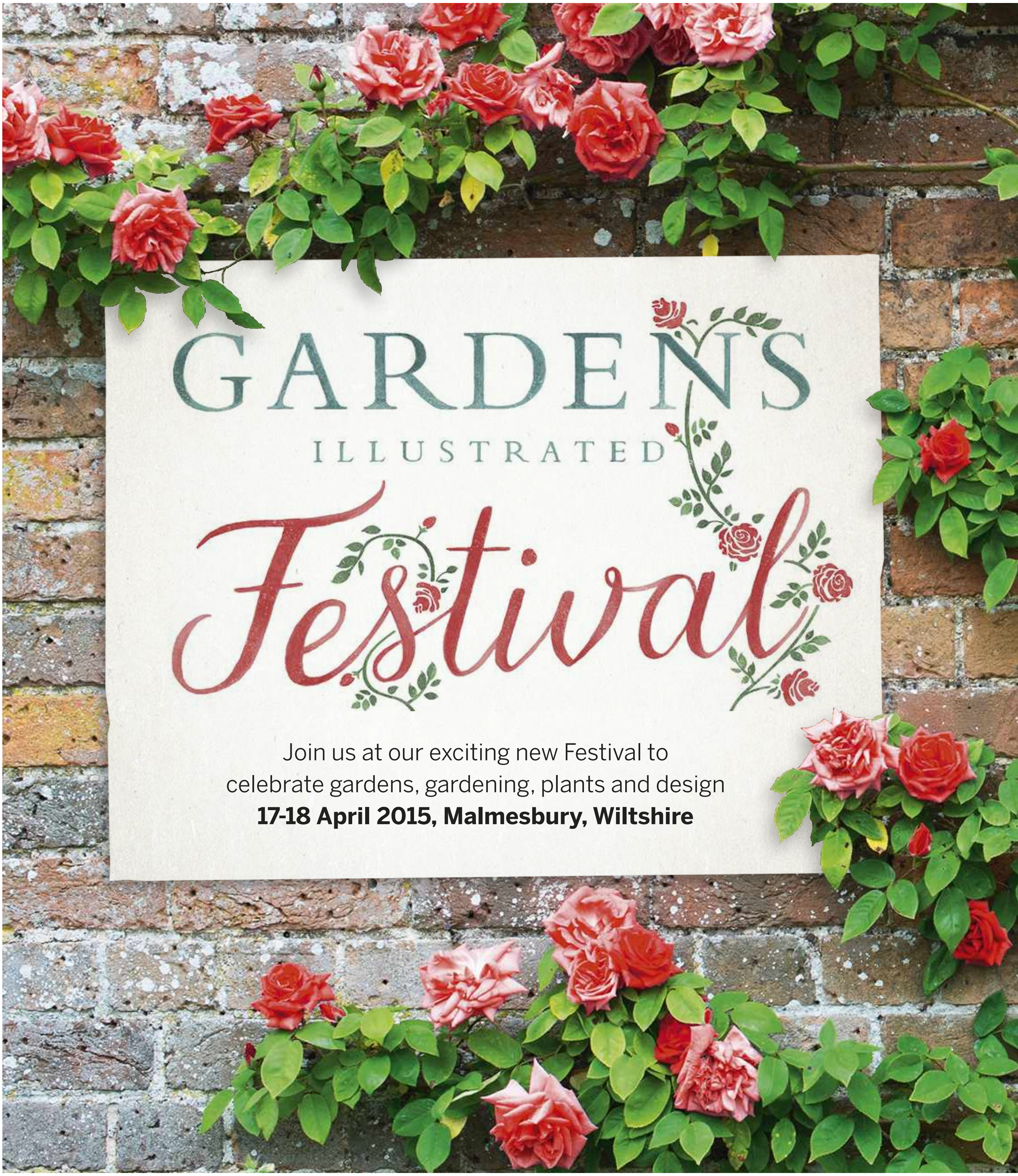
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Gardens Illustrated Festival
17-18 April 2015 – see below

Gardens Illustrated Talk
Tuesday 19 May 2015 – page 10

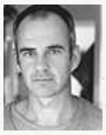
PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Choose from a selection of talks from leading experts and gardening VIPs

FRIDAY 17 APRIL Tickets £25

Troy Scott Smith, Dan Pearson and Chris Marchant
The Authentic Sissinghurst – recapturing the distinctive qualities of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's garden
7.30-8.30pm held in Malmesbury Abbey

SATURDAY 18 APRIL Tickets £13.50 for each talk

IN MALMESBURY ABBEY	IN THE WESLEYAN ROOM	IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL
 Fergus Garrett Designing with Plants at Great Dixter 10-11am	 **Alys Fowler** Letters to a Bee Keeper 10-11am	 **Derry Watkins** New Plants – Choosing and Using 10-11am
 Tom Stuart-Smith The Language of Place – Gardens and Culture 12-1pm	 **Sarah Price** Planting Styles: A Review of Sarah's Work 12-1pm	 **Annie Guilfoyle** A Creative Approach to Small Gardens 12-1pm
 Sarah Raven The Home Cutting Garden 2-3pm	 **James Alexander-Sinclair** Dancing in Borders 2-3pm	 **Jason Ingram** Gardens Through the Lens 2-3pm
 Anna Pavord The Flowering of Tuscany 4-5pm	 **Rachel Dein** The Ultimate in Pressed Flowers 4-5pm	 **Noël Kingsbury** Travels with NK 4-5pm
	 Tom Mitchell The Modern Day Plant Hunter 5.30-6.30pm	 **Frank Ronan** The Invisible Garden 5.30-6.30pm

As part of the festival why not visit our traditional marquee in the grounds of the Abbey Cloister Gardens where you'll find a selection of our favourite nurseries and suppliers of beautiful garden products. You can also sign up to one of our garden clinics to chat through design and plant queries with an expert. And don't miss out on a visit to the Abbey House Gardens with its formal knot gardens, riverside walks and spectacular tulip displays. Tours can be booked as part of your festival booking. Full details and bookings on:

gardensfestival.com 0871 230 7156*

*calls cost 10p per minute plus network extras

TIM GAINEY / ALAMY, ANDREW MONTGOMERY, CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Key to Penelope Hobhouse's garden design is a strong formal framework paired with exuberant planting – as here at her new garden in Somerset.

Sarah Prices's work at the Olympic Park included plantings of 250 species to create an immersive journey through the UK's plant history.

Jinny Blom's carefully considered design ensures this Chilterns garden sits comfortably in its surrounding landscape.

JASON INGRAM, MARIANNE MAJERUS

Gardens Illustrated Talk

With Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price

Join us on **Tuesday 19 May** at the Royal Geographical Society in London, with three generations of garden designers

We are delighted to once again be hosting the *Gardens Illustrated* Talk. Our speakers – Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price – represent three generations of women designers and will discuss their work, as well as consider the role of women in garden design past, present and future. Book now for Standard or Premium tickets. All tickets are allocated seating with premium ticket holders seated in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Penelope Hobhouse is a garden writer, garden designer, garden historian, lecturer and gardener. For 14 years she was in charge of the National Trust garden at Tintinhull House in Somerset. Now in her eighties, she has recently moved house and is relishing the opportunity of developing a new garden.

Jinny Blom set up a landscape and garden design practice in 2000, having previously followed a career as a psychologist. Her gardens are defined by beautiful craftsmanship and intelligent planting. She is currently working on projects in the UK, Italy, the USA and Kenya.

Sarah Price trained in fine art before becoming a garden designer. She achieved worldwide recognition for her work at the Olympic Park in 2012. With a life-long love of wild and natural environments, she believes gardens should inspire a deeper connection with the natural world.

Talk details

- **Date** Tuesday 19 May 2015.
- **Venue** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

PROGRAMME

- **6pm** Doors open – Cash bar available.
- **7pm** Talk begins.
- **8.30pm** Q&A session concludes.
- **9pm** Doors close.

TICKETS

- **Subscribers***
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- **Non-subscribers**
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  All tickets are allocated seating. Premium tickets are located in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Gardens Illustrated reserves the right to replace any of the speakers with other speakers of equal stature in the unlikely event that any of them are unable to attend. Tickets must be booked in advance. Please let us know when booking of any special access requirements. Tickets are non-refundable. Driving to the lecture is not advised. Nearest London Underground station is South Kensington. Cash bar.

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Dig in

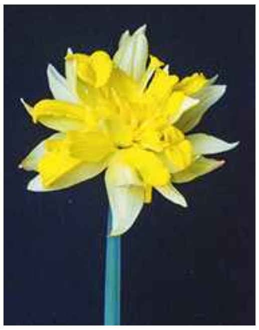
What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON

Explore Pentillie Castle's 55 acres of woodland gardens and see if you can spot the recently discovered daffodil 'Pentillie Duke'.

SPRING DAYS OUT

Daffodil daze



PENTILLIE CASTLE

Enjoy the spring display of daffodils at Pentillie Castle in Cornwall. The 55 acres of woodland and walled garden, set above the River Tamar, are rich with spring flowers and, if you make a visit this year, you should keep your eyes peeled for the newly discovered *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* 'Pentillie Duke'. Stumbled across by bulb experts Alan Street of Avon Bulbs and Matt Bishop on a visit to the gardens, 'Pentillie Duke' is a fully double form with star-shaped flowers. The new cultivar has been named after the garden's head gardener of 30 years, Chris Duke. Pentillie is currently building up stocks so it will be able to offer the daffodil for sale in future years. The garden is open to visitors on special days only so it's worth making a note of forthcoming spring Open Days: Mothering Sunday, 15 March, 12-4pm, and Easter Monday, 6 April, 12-4pm, for your chance to see Pentillie at its early season best. Pentillie Castle, Paynters Cross, St Mellion, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 6QD. **01579 350 044, pentillie.co.uk**

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Peter Beales

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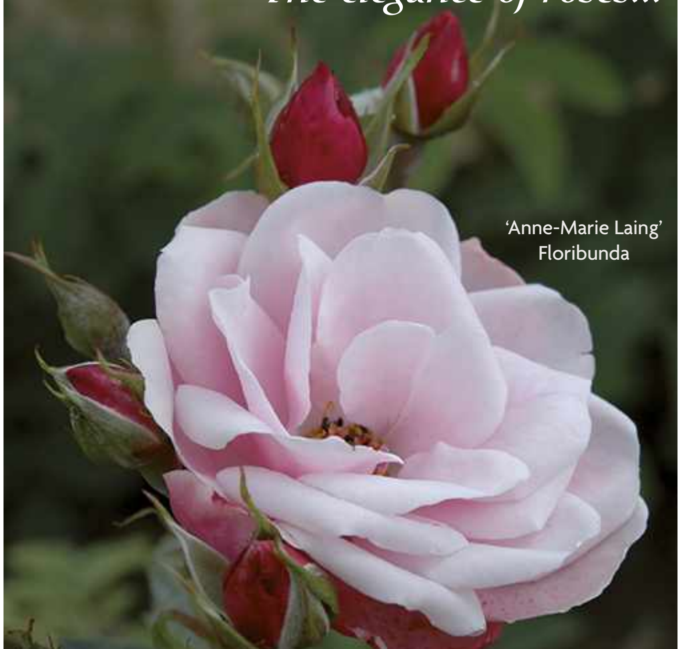

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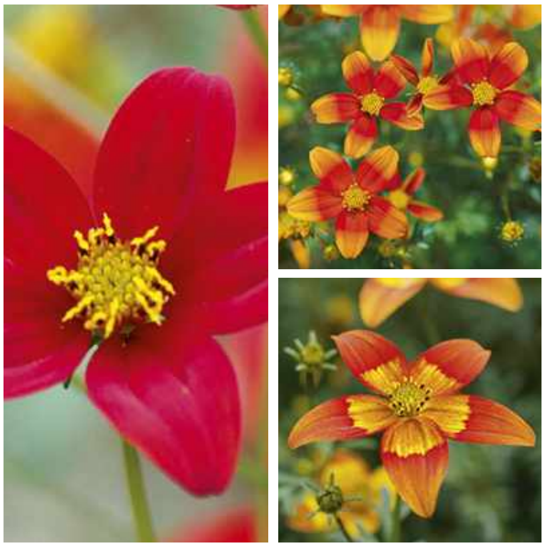
NEW PLANTS

Redy for summer

Bidens are more usually seen in yellow but the new Hawaiian Flare series, from Mr Fothergills, flowers in combinations of red and orange. Plants have a semi-trailing habit and combine well with dark, coppery or lime-green-coloured foliage, making it good for container displays. Available as a collection of six plants, two each of 'Orange Drop', 'Flare Red Drop' and 'Flare Orange Yellow Brush', £8.95. **Tel 0845 371 0518, mr-fothergills.co.uk**



FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Mount Stewart garden restoration

The National Trust can boast a number of success stories when it comes to restoring kitchen gardens – Knighthayes in Devon being one of the finest examples. Now it has hopes of bringing the previously unseen walled garden at Mount Stewart in Northern Ireland back to life and the Trust has begun a campaign to raise funds. The two-acre site, built between 1780 and 1789 provided plants for the garden, and fruit and vegetables for the house, while the now dilapidated greenhouse is home to a White Syrian vine, considered to be the second oldest vine in the UK, after the Hampton Court Palace vine of 1769. The restoration is estimated to cost £400,000 and should be completed by 2016. This is just one of the Trust's current kitchen garden restoration projects; others include projects at Gibside, Quarry Bank Mill and Blickling. If you would like to donate funds, please go to **nationaltrust.org.uk/walledgardens**

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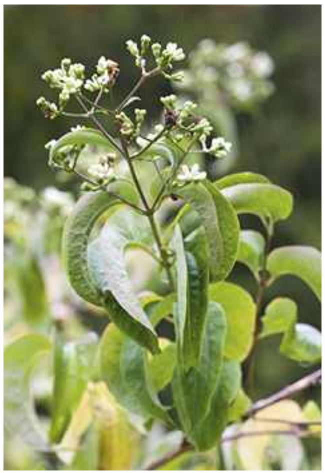


CORRECTION

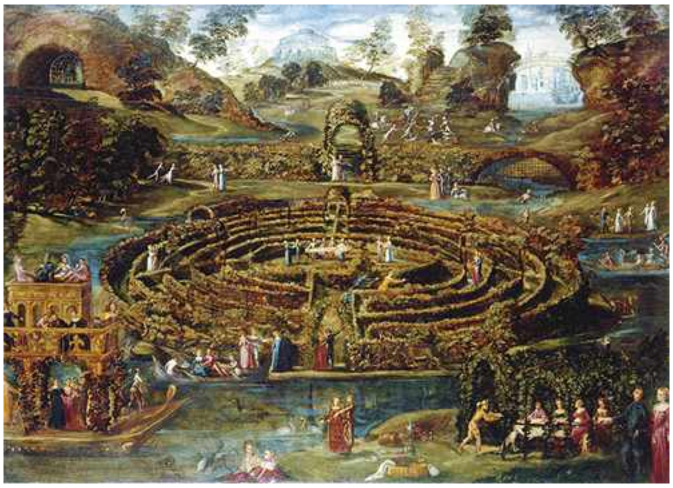
Right plant

In last month's 100 Plants Every Gardener Should Grow, chosen by Penelope Hobhouse (issue 218, page 39), we incorrectly numbered one of the images. The plant we pictured on page 46 as choice 52 was in fact an image of *Hoheria sexstylosa* 'Stardust' and not *Heptacodium miconioides*, which looks like this. Apologies for any confusion.

GARDEN HISTORY

Painting Paradise exhibition

The changing nature of gardens is explored in a new exhibition at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. With some 150 drawings, paintings, books, manuscripts and decorative art drawn from The Royal Collection, *Painting Paradise: The Art of the Garden* spans the 16th to early 20th centuries and includes works by da Vinci, Rembrandt and Fabergé. 20 March – 11 October 2015, The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London. **royalcollection.org.uk**. To link with the exhibition, BBC Radio 3 is broadcasting a concert of flower- and garden-inspired music. BBC R3, 5 April at 2pm.



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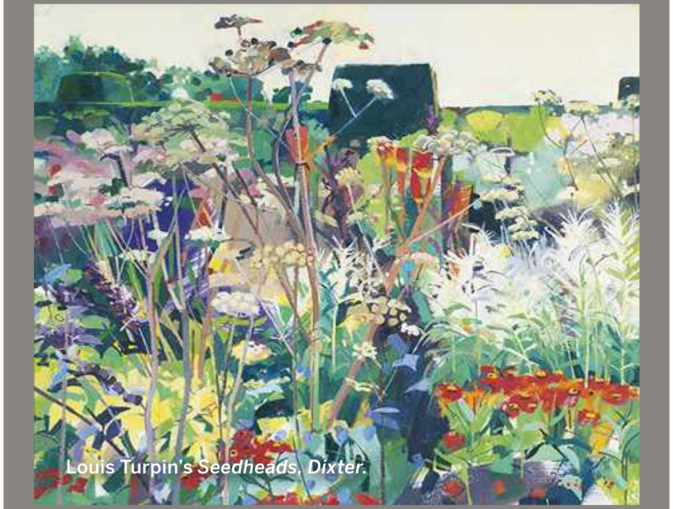
Diary



Louis Turpin's Seedheads, Dixter.

- **Louis Turpin: Landscape Journeys**
Horticultural artist Turpin continues to explore his passion for gardens and the landscape in his latest exhibition. 1-21 March. Fosse Gallery, The Manor House, The Square, Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire GL54 1AF. **Tel 01451 831319, fossegallery.com**
- **Chiswick House Camellia show**
Displays of 33 cultivars – many of them the earliest introduced to Britain in 1823. Heritage camellias for sale. 28 February – 29 March, 10am-4pm (closed Mondays). Free entry (donations welcomed). Chiswick House, London W4 2RP. **chgt.org.uk**
- **Gresgarth Open Day**
Hellebore and hamamelis displays at designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd's private garden. 8 March 11am-3pm, £8.50. Gresgarth Hall, Caton, Lancaster LA2 9NB. **Tel 01524 771838, arabellalennoxboyd.com/gresgarth/public.html**
- **Garden maintenance courses**
Day courses covering Part One 'Understanding the basics', 14 March, and Part Two 'Understanding the care of plants', 15 March, 9am-5pm, £119 each. West Dean, Nr Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ. **Tel 01243 818301, www.westdean.org.uk**
- **Daffodil day at Hartland Abbey**
18th-century walled and woodland gardens, and parkland filled with spring highlights of daffodils, camellias, hellebores, primroses and violets. 15 March, 11am-4pm. Flower Day entry prices £5. (Entry to the house £4, 12-3.30pm). Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6DT. **Tel 01237 441496/441234, hartlandabbey.com**
- **Secrets of the Cutting Garden**
Talk by Common Farm Flowers owner and founder Georgie Newbery on growing and arranging your own cut flowers. 17 March, 6.30-8pm, £15. Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Rd, London SE1 7LB. **Tel 020 7401 8865, gardenmuseum.org.uk**
- **Edible Garden Show**
Information and inspiration with expert advice on all aspects of grow your own. Incorporates The Good Life Show. 20-22 March, £20 (book in advance for discounts). Alexandra Palace, London N22 7AY. **Tel 0871 230 3451, theediblegardenshow.co.uk**

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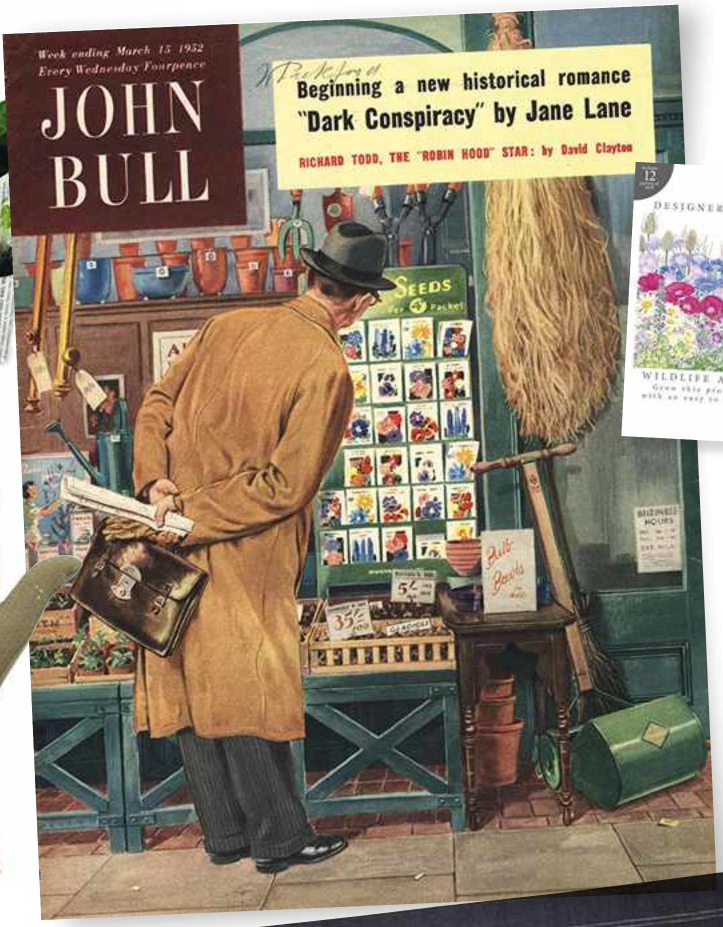
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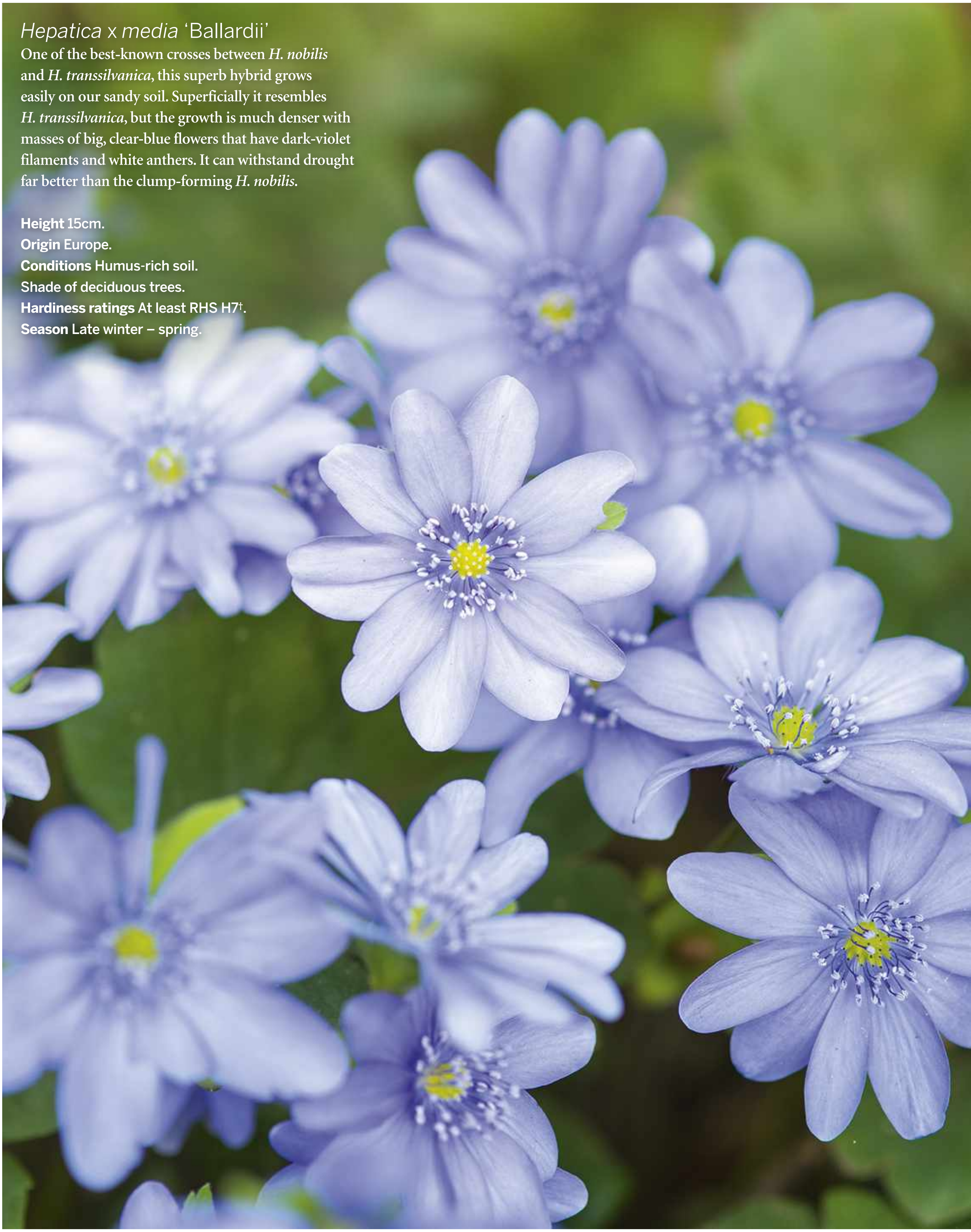
Hepatica x *media* 'Ballardii'

One of the best-known crosses between *H. nobilis* and *H. transsilvanica*, this superb hybrid grows easily on our sandy soil. Superficially it resembles *H. transsilvanica*, but the growth is much denser with masses of big, clear-blue flowers that have dark-violet filaments and white anthers. It can withstand drought far better than the clump-forming *H. nobilis*.

Height 15cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Humus-rich soil.
Shade of deciduous trees.
Hardiness ratings At least RHS H7[†].
Season Late winter – spring.



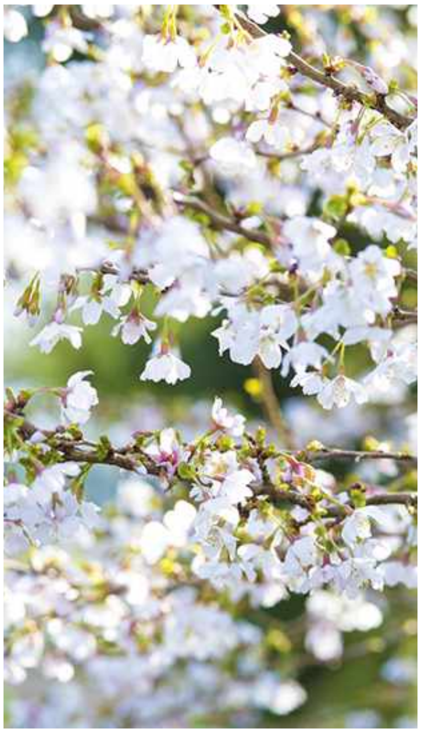
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

March plants

Hans chooses his favourites from the pretty flowers and delicate blossoms that help to brighten March's longer, sunnier days

WORDS HANS KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Hans Kramer co-owns Kwekerij De Hessenhof in the Netherlands. hessenhof.nl



Prunus incisa 'Kojo-no-mai'

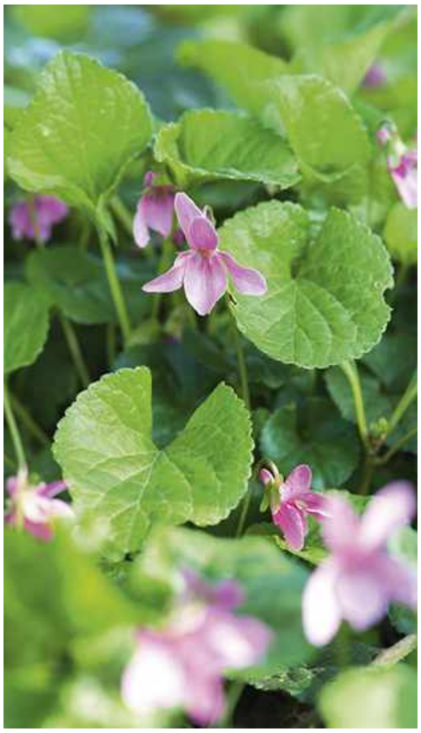
This Fuji cherry is a fantastic little shrub for a winter garden. Its dense zig-zag, forking branches give way to many tiny buds. In a mild winter, the first flowers will open in February, but more often it is March. Hepaticas work well beneath it, as do other little treasures, such as *Cyclamen coum* and *Eranthis*. I prefer it grafted as a small tree, which I once saw at an RHS show in early spring. This way it only takes up little space, yet gives plenty of interest at winter's end. AGM*.

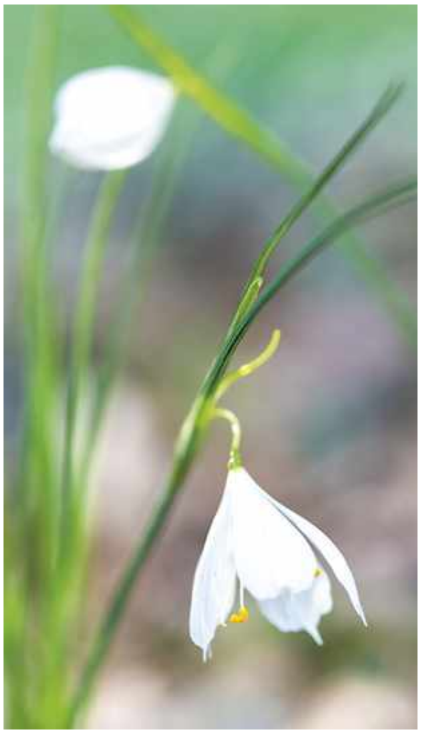
Height 2m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Any soil that is not too poor. Sun to dappled shade.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b (heavy frost can damage the flowers).
Season Early spring.

Viola 'Coeur d'Alsace'

Recently, there has been a lot of renewed interest in some of the older cultivars of sweet violet, which is wonderful. We have collected around 30 but many are similar to each other or not true to name. This one 'Coeur d'Alsace' was registered by French nurseryman Armand Millet almost 100 years ago and stands out for its clear-pink colour. On warm days, the scent is heavenly. The flower stems are a tad too short to cut them for a vase but in the garden it grows in places where nothing else will – at the south side of an old beech hedge, for example.

Height 15cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Almost any position, any soil.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season Early spring.



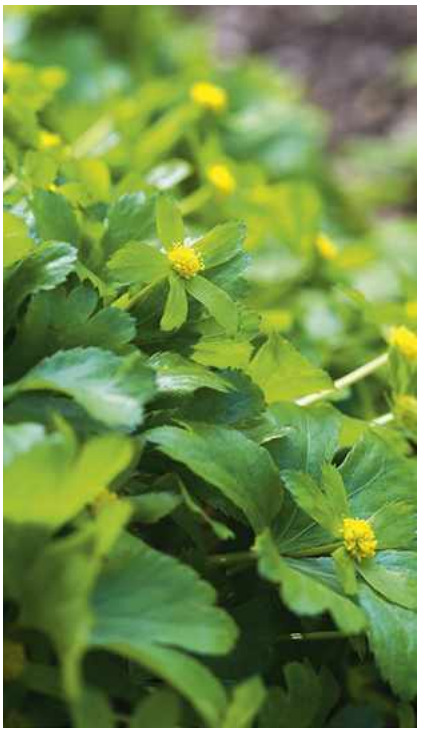


Olsynium douglasii 'Album'

Although this white rush lily is officially classified under *Olsynium*, many will still know it as *Sisyrinchium douglasii* var. *album*. It is certainly one of the finest species with almost linear leaves. Following mild winters it will start producing big, white, nodding flowers in March. From a distance you might mistake it for a large-flowered *Leucojum*, but it's much shorter in stature. In spring, it needs a fairly damp soil, but won't mind if this dries out later in the season as it dies down completely in summer.

Height 20cm.
Origin Western North America.
Conditions Damp soil in spring, drier in summer, full sun to part shade.
Hardiness ratings RHS H6.
Season Spring.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



Hacquetia epipactis

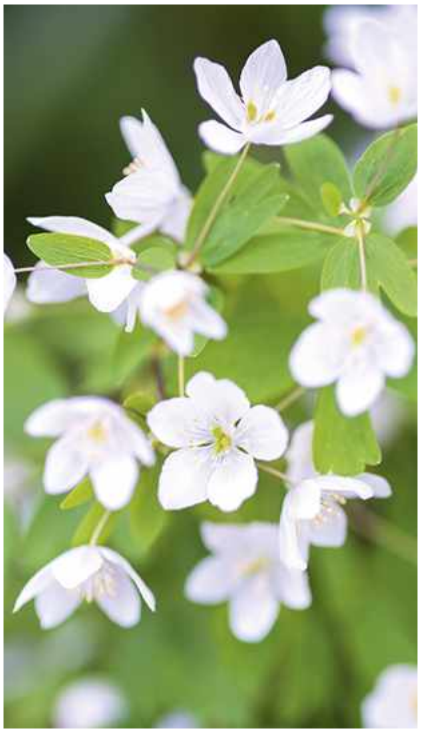
It always astonishes me that so few people know about *Hacquetia* even though it is widespread in the mountains of Central Europe. At the centre of each of its distinctive large involucres (whorl of bracts) is a circular cluster of tiny flowers that, with a little imagination, you could say look like a low, yellow *Astrantia*. This is no surprise, as both belong to the same family of *Apiaceae*. It makes a nice ground cover, and in early spring suddenly changes colour from lime green to bright yellow. Plant some yellow hellebores between the tapestry for a super show. AGM.

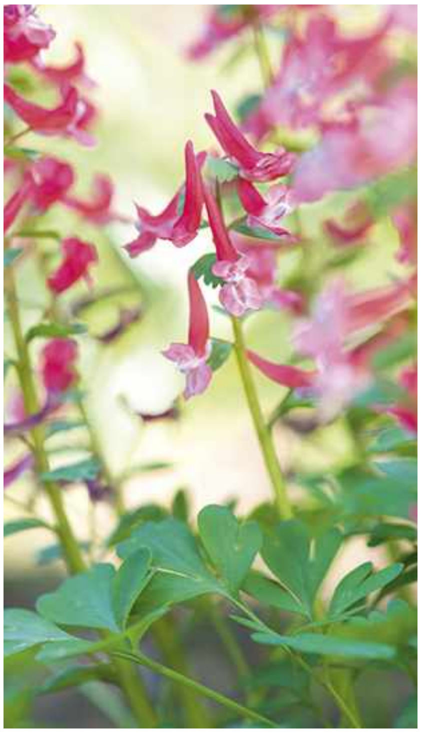
Height 15cm.
Origin Central Europe.
Conditions Shade, fertile soil alkaline.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season Spring.

Isopyrum thalictroides

The glorious morning in Romania when, looking for hellebores, I stumbled across acres of isopyrum is one that will forever stay in my memory. In early spring slender stems emerge from small tubers and push their way above the ground – nicely set with delicate, thalictrum-like leaves. Soon anemone-like flowers open; pure white with yellow anthers. I know this does not sound spectacular but you will value this quiet plant more and more over the years. It dies down in the summer, giving you the opportunity to plant something else to take its place.

Height 20cm.
Origin Eastern Europe.
Conditions Shade, humus-rich soil.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7.
Season Early spring.





Corydalis solida 'Fire Bird'

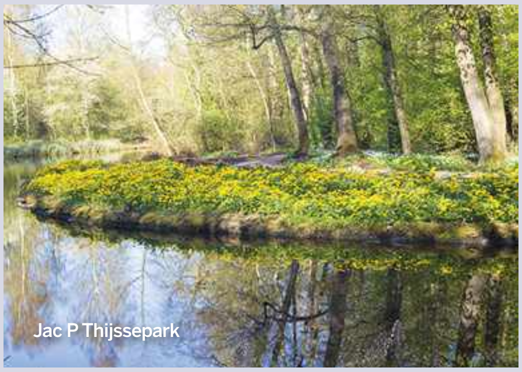
The common Dutch name for this plant translates as 'bird on a branchlet' and if you look closely you can imagine there is a tiny bird in the flower sitting on a small twig, ready to fly away. This cultivar, which we know as 'Vuurvogel', is one of the most colourful available. It is very robust with masses of rich, orange-red flowers. I planted a few under some trees 20 years ago and now hundreds flower every year. It may be a plant you see for only six weeks a year but it's one you will always be eager to see again.

Height 25cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Part shade or sun, humus-rich soil.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season Early spring.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best, both here in the UK and in mainland Europe.

Named after a well-known Dutch conservationist and botanist, the **Jac P Thijssepark** in Amstelveen, near Amsterdam, is an absolute must-visit. It was completed shortly after the Second World War in low moorland with bogs. It is known as a *heempark* or home park, as it is planted with only native species. I like it best in early spring when the trees are still sleeping but underplanting is starting to come alive. In March you can see vast patches of *Chrysosplenium* and *Corydalis solida*. It is a very sensibly laid out park and a pleasure to explore. Jac P Thijssepark, Prince Bernhard Avenue, Amstelveen, nr Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0)2054 04911, thijssepark.nl



Jac P Thijssepark

MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Back in the UK, March is the month to marvel at the

Cardamine quinquefolia

In late winter and early spring the sharply toothed leaves of this little woodlander are a welcome sight and it's not long before clear, purple-pink flowers appear. They have four large petals and if you're able to acquire a good clone, as I once did from the now closed Washfield Nursery in Kent, you'll have masses of flowers. With its scaly rhizomes, it can spread into a large colony in a few years. I grow it beneath early flowering *Fothergilla*, which makes a super combination, and plant *Geranium wallichianum* above it to continue the show once it dies down.

Height 20cm.
Origin Eastern Europe, Caucasus.
Conditions Shade, fertile, humus-rich soil.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7.
Season Early spring.

Pachyphragma macrophyllum

I've never come across a plant that is so useful. It tolerates the driest shadiest spot, and its pure-white flowers seem to emerge straight from the ground after being hidden between the thick rosettes of leaves in winter. The flower stalk rises to around a foot in height and, following pollination, the flowers slowly turn into light-brown seedheads. When they're ripe you can hear the seeds rattle in their pods. Meanwhile, the round leaves get bigger and make it difficult for weeds to emerge.

Height 40cm.
Origin Caucasus.
Conditions Semi-shade to shade, every soil.
Hardiness ratings RHS H7.
Season Spring.

Narcissus 'Mite'

I know some will find this a controversial opinion, but for me daffodils are more rewarding to grow than many of the more fashionable – and expensive – snowdrops. They offer far greater variety and this miniature daffodil is a real star. It's a hybrid of *Narcissus cyclamineus* but grows much better than the species itself, and likes our acid soil. It has an all-yellow flower with reflexed petals surrounding a long, narrow trumpet, and is a real charmer. Plant a potful near the house so that you can look at these intriguing flowers in close-up. AGM.

Height 15cm.
Origin Southern Europe.
Conditions Sun or semi-shade, acid.
Hardiness ratings RHS H6.
Season Early spring.

beautiful blooms of magnolias at **Caerhays Estate** in Cornwall. There are more than 50 species and over 450 named hybrids on display. There is also an RHS Recommended Lecture on magnolias by Charles Williams at Caerhays on 13 March, which includes a 'behind the bushes' tour of the whole garden. Caerhays Estate, Gorran, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6LY. Tel 01872 501310, caerhays.co.uk

Take the chance to visit John Massey's garden at **Ashwood Nurseries**, which opens on 21 March, where you'll enjoy a vibrant spring show of daffodils, anemones and hepaticas. John is also giving a lecture on hepaticas on 25 March, which will include a guided tour of the garden. Ashwood Nurseries, Ashwood Lower Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0AE. Tel 01384 401996, ashwoodnurseries.com

PHOTOSHOT HOLDINGS LTD / ALAMY

John Massey's garden at Ashwood Nurseries

Felley Priory in Nottinghamshire, is a wonder to behold this month with its large collection of daffodils, including some extremely rare varieties, as well as magnolias. Felley Priory, Underwood, Nottinghamshire NG16 5FJ. Tel 01773 810230, felleypriory.co.uk

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In the garden

CLUSTER BEANS
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Jojo is looking forward to a summer of Indian dishes and filling her east London plot with Asian delights of chillies, peppers, okra and giant-leaved bottle gourds

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

A few years ago a friend brought me several packets of vegetable seeds back from India. There were *pusa navbahar* (cluster beans), two types of *brinjal* (aubergine), *dudhi* (bottle gourds), *palak* (spinach), *pusa sawani* (okra), chilli and white radish – enough for an entire allotment's worth of Indian vegetables. The seeds were beautifully packaged; the plant names spelled out in black, in old-fashioned typefaces and illustrated with drawings of vegetables. Too beautiful to use, they sit in the letter rack on my desk, now long out of date. Though no seeds germinated, the idea of an Indian allotment stayed with me.

This year I plan to do it. First came the thought of a windowsill packed with bright red, orange, yellow and purple chilli peppers. Then came the accidental discovery of fresh turmeric in my local market. If you've only ever used dried turmeric the fresh root is a revelation. This small, buff-coloured rhizome looks like a large grub, peel away the thin skin and a deep orange colour is revealed. Grate the fibrous root and pour over a little boiling water and you have a bowl full of very fragrant deep-orange liquid with an oily sheen. The taste is earthy with a citrus tang. You can use it in Indian cooking in place of dried turmeric or drink it as a tea (but not if you are pregnant or have diabetes). Think of how much stronger and fresher tasting fresh ginger is than dried and you'll get an idea of how to use it. But watch out, it stains fingers and surfaces yellow; it dyed my pumpkin soup egg yolk-orange and makes a very finely coloured kedgeree (smoked haddock, egg, spices and rice).

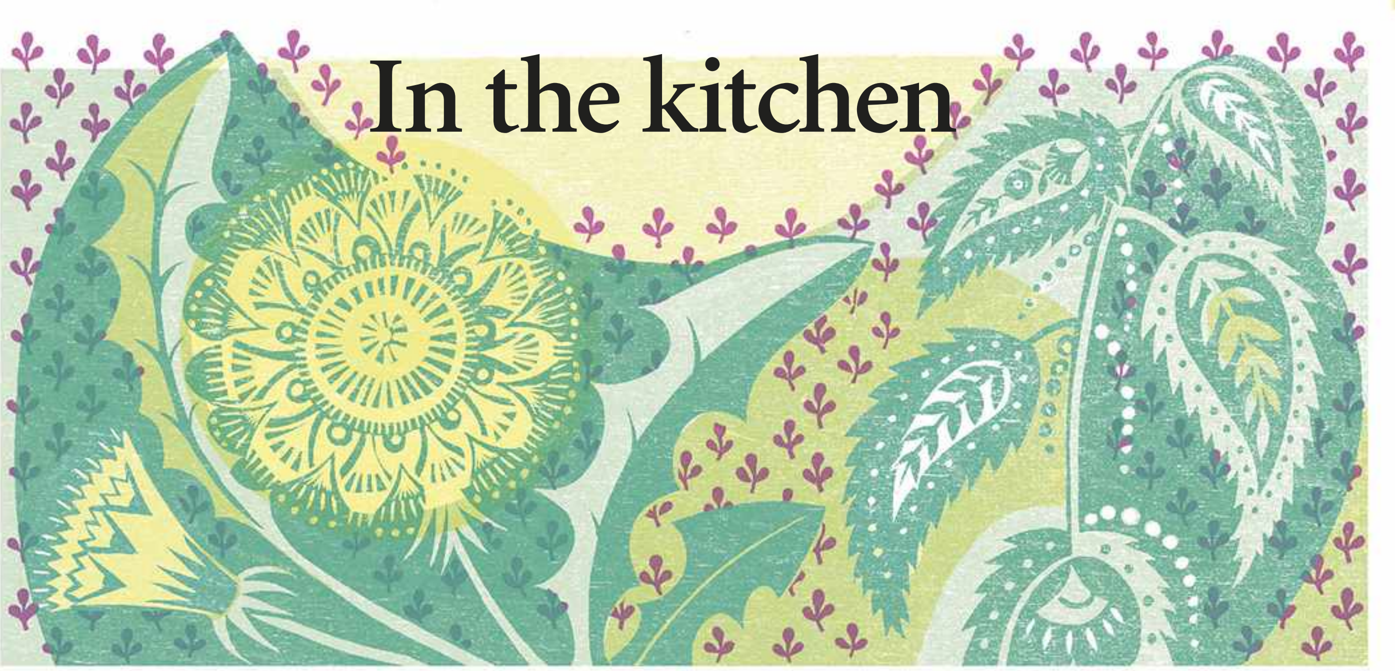
Flavour aside, the rhizome is believed to have some powerful health benefits with anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory properties. In India, turmeric has long been used in Ayurvedic medicine and now a growing body of research in the West supports its efficacy. Turmeric is not hard to grow and if you do so you can also use the leaves to flavour curries and stews. Take a fresh rhizome and pop it under 5cm of potting compost and you should see growth fairly quickly. Keep moist and feed every two weeks.

Meera Sodha's book of Indian home cooking, *Made in India* (Fig Tree, £20), was one of last year's most delicious new cook books. I asked Meera for her favourite Indian vegetables and she suggested cassava, mooli (long white radish), bottle gourds and okra. Both okra and bottle gourds will grow well under cover although cassava might prove tricky. A few days later I received a shiny brown seed in the post. It was a tea seed Meera had brought back with her from a plantation in the Kodagu district of southern India. I plan to grow it on the allotment and pick the aromatic leaves tender and young for a fresh infusion (or perhaps an infused flavouring for a simple milk ice).

WHAT TO SOW NOW

- Pot gardeners should consider lighting up their front step or balcony with a firework display of chilli peppers. Try the bushy 'Sparkler', which is covered in elongated, pointed vivid red peppers – £2 from Sea Spring Seeds (**seaspringseeds.co.uk**) – or the equally attractive 'Spike' with long, thin, red fruits. The Real Seed Catalogue (**realseeds.co.uk**) has the remarkable 'Pyramid' chilli (£1.99 for 20 seeds) with a stubby triangular shape. It starts out purple and ripens into an array of pinks, oranges and reds, like multi-coloured fairy lights. Or try 'Lemon Drop' a super-hot cultivar with tapered pale-yellow fruits and a strong citrus flavour. Chillies need heat to get started so start in an airing cupboard if you don't have a heated propagator.
- After a few successive summers of green tomatoes I am switching to two cultivars (from the Real Seed Catalogue) that ripen early: 'Latah' and 'Stupice'. Both have a high tolerance for short summers and are perfect for greenhouse-less gardeners. Out on the plot it's time to plant chitted potatoes in trenches, lined with well-rotted compost or comfrey, and sow a line or two of radishes, rocket, onions, mustard greens and corn salad.

In the kitchen



There is something peculiarly satisfying about pulling and then eating weeds. It's the ultimate in synchronicity for the gardener cook. Not only do wild greens provide an iron-rich ingredient at a time when few greens are available but harvesting the first nettles and dandelions means you have your eyes to the ground. Knowing when the earth has begun to warm up again is vitally important for successful planting. I am a fairly conservative forager, sticking to common plants I can be sure of identifying. Nettles and dandelions are two of my favourites. I like to blanch my dandelions (excluding the light to make the leaves less green and bitter) by letting them grow under a flowerpot for a week; then I eat them boiled and dressed with lemon juice and olive oil. Take 450g of dandelion greens and plunge them into a big pot of salted water for about five minutes, drain and spread them on to a tea towel to dry, then squeeze them gently to get rid of some, but not all, of the water (leaving a little helps dilute the lemon juice). In a bowl, dress the greens with the juice of one lemon and about two tablespoons of olive oil. If you fancy a change, try sautéing blanched dandelions with olive oil, chilli pepper and garlic.

I have a large expanse of nettles behind my shed. I pick only the very tender tops (with gloves on) and blanch these in salted water, then press them dry between two tea towels. I use nettles as a spinach substitute with feta and pine nuts on a tomato-less pizza, in *börek* (filo triangles) or added to a simple lemon risotto with some crème fraîche and parmesan.

If you have overwintered mustard leaves on your plot, pick a bunch of bitter leaves and cook them with green lentils for a restorative lunch for four. For this you need to take one bunch – around 500g should be enough – of leaves then, once you've removed the stems, wash them and wilt them in the water that still clings to their leaves, drain and chop coarsely. Meanwhile peel and finely chop an onion, a celery stalk, a small fennel bulb and a carrot. Then heat four tablespoons of olive oil and in this fry the vegetables with two garlic cloves, peeled and smashed. Cover the pan and then sweat over a medium heat until the vegetables are soft, then stir in one heaped teaspoonful each of finely chopped fresh oregano and rosemary. Add 450g of small green lentils and a litre of water, bring to the boil and simmer until the lentils are soft, then season. Briefly sauté the wilted greens in olive oil and add to the lentils. Add the juice of half a lemon and offer lemon wedges on the side. Serve with sourdough toast, rubbed with olive oil and garlic. □

> There is something peculiarly satisfying about pulling and then eating weeds. It's the ultimate in synchronicity for the gardener cook

RECIPES

Dal with sorrel
Split mung beans cook quickly and evenly to a smooth purée to which you can add various herbs and green vegetables. This recipe produces a lemony flavoured dish but you can vary it by adding chard, amsoi greens (see right), spinach or nettles: 200g mung beans, 750ml water, ¼tsp turmeric, ½-1tsp salt to taste, pinch of asafoetida, ½tsp whole cumin seeds, 2 whole dried red chillies, 1 shallot, peeled and finely chopped, small bunch of sorrel, de-stemmed. Put the mung beans in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil and skim froth. Add the turmeric and cook for 45 minutes. Add the salt and stir in the chopped sorrel. Cook until tender. Heat the oil in a pan, and when hot add the spices in the order above. After a few seconds add the shallot and cook until it colours, pour into the cooked dal and serve.

Amsoi greens fried in spiced oil
Chiltern Seeds (chilternseeds.co.uk) sells seeds of amsoi green or Indian mustard greens. It's what the catalogue describes as a 'delicious, tender green' with a peppery heat; add it to dals or use it to make this dish of wilted greens: 500g amsoi greens, 1tbsp mustard oil, ½tsp whole black mustard seeds, 1 dried chilli, 1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed, salt to season. De-stem the greens and rinse well. Heat the mustard oil and when it's hot add the black mustard seeds. Once the seeds start popping add the dried chilli and fry until it darkens. Add the garlic to the oil and, almost instantly afterwards, add the leaves. Using tongs, turn the leaves quickly in the pan until they wilt and cook until the water evaporates, then season with salt. Serve the fried greens with shop-bought samosas for a quick and easy Indian lunch.

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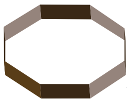

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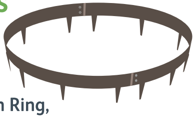

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Janet Hague

From human rights campaigner to freelance gardener, Janet now keeps a range of gardens in shape, as well as working with designers to help implement their designs

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory Looking at dew cupped in sedum leaves when I was four and thinking how magical it was.

First plant love Lily of the valley that spread like a carpet under Mum's apple tree. It is so simple, clean and beautiful, and smells divine.

Life before gardening I was head of campaigns for Amnesty International, which was challenging, rewarding and stressful. I needed a change of pace and atmosphere, and felt a real yearning to work outside; to be physical and creative.

Who are your horticultural heroes? I think Nigel Dunnett is a real visionary. His naturalistic and ecological approach to planting is inspiring. The London Olympic Park was a sight to behold.

Three most worthwhile tips for every gardener Nematodes are very effective for dealing with vine weevils. Even small gardens have space for a tree. You can never have too many bulbs.

What principles guide your attitude to gardening An organic approach is very important to me, looking at a garden as a microcosm where everything plays its part in moderation.

Most valuable training The Capel Manor planting design diploma was intense and very hard work. I learned so much there, and it's a beautiful place to study.

Dream plant destination I would love to go to Japan, to see acers in the autumn, and to visit the Kokedera Moss Temple.

Favourite planting style Cottage-garden planting – full, exuberant, never a dull moment and slightly random looking.

Challenges facing gardeners today Since I began gardening six years ago we've had prolonged and severe frost, thick snow, drought and flood. It's playing havoc with growing cycles, pests and diseases and garden (and wider) ecology.

Favourite gardening blogs – or books? I really enjoy reading the blog 'Out of my Shed' by Naomi Schillinger. It follows the community vegetable growing project she set up in north London, as well as revelling in new plant finds and garden visits.

Most embarrassing moment while gardening I was once caught having a pee on the compost heap by a client, who graciously told me that all the family do this when they are in the garden.

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JOYS OF SPRING
In the first of his new series, Matthew Reese, head gardener at Malverleys in Hampshire, creates three striking container displays
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GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED

In spring wilder, less formal areas of the garden, become a colourful tapestry of tulips, narcissi and crocus that are encouraged to colonise the rough grass.

Opposite The wide double border, originally designed by Lanning Roper, leads up to the house. The domed temple to its right commemorates a huge tulip tree, lost in the storm of 1987.

Life story

For more than 40 years, Stewart Grimshaw and his late partner, Simon Sainsbury, breathed life into the neglected gardens of Woolbeding in West Sussex. Now their glorious creation has passed into the safe hands of the National Trust

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS

In brief

Name Woolbeding.
What Large 20th-century garden divided into rooms and a woodland dell and water garden.
Points of interest Herbaceous borders, potager, garden rooms, temples, contemporary sculpture.
Where West Sussex.
Size 26 acres.
Soil Free-draining sandy loam.
Climate Temperature ranges from 30°C in the summer to -10°C during the winter. High walls and hedges provide shelter from cold winds.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

A potager, flanked by tall columns of Ballerina apple trees and obelisks of sweet peas and runner beans, encloses jovial plantings of coloured salads

As we step out of his house to visit the garden, Stewart Grimshaw realises that he doesn't have his secateurs and needs to return to collect them. I realise immediately that I am with a garden maker, not merely a garden owner. We are at Woolbeding, the garden that Stewart and his partner, the late Simon Sainsbury, created over 40 years, which is now one of the brightest jewels in the National Trust's treasury of 20th-century gardens.

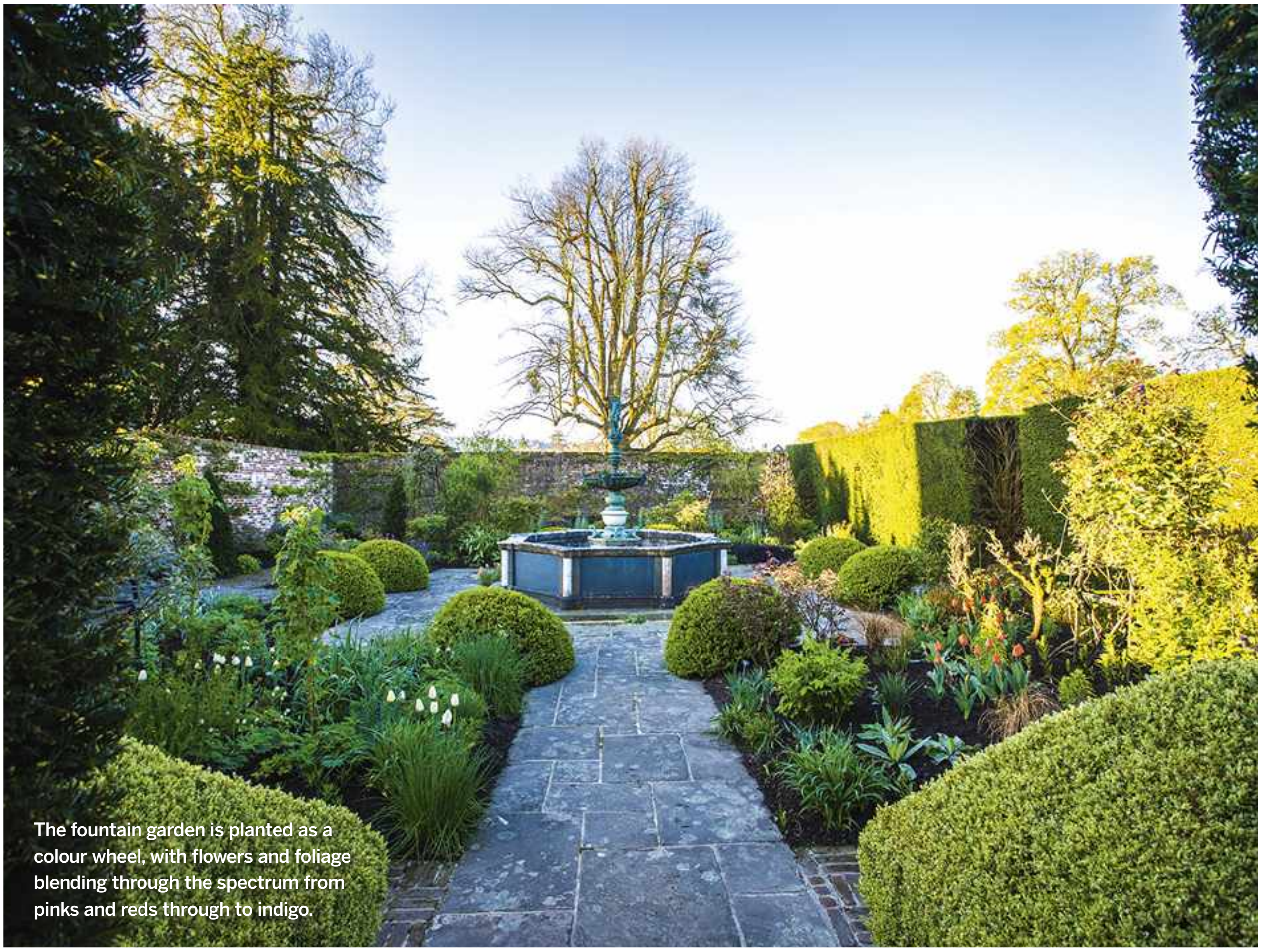
The couple acquired the lease for the house in 1972. "The house and overgrown garden was intriguing and magical. It was our dream house," says Stewart. Youthful enthusiasm ignored the challenge of the damp and decaying house and the 26 acres of wilderness. They saw in the place a gem that they would spend the next 40 years polishing. Simon died in 2006, leaving Stewart to continue developing the gardens and to finalise their handover to the National Trust.

The first part of the garden the couple tackled, with the help of designer Lanning Roper, was a long, double, herbaceous border. Originally this was planted with white summer flowers and silver foliage, but Stewart gradually extended the season with bulbs and annuals and added blue agapanthus, salvias and geraniums. The process of refining and reassessing the border continues. Last year the dark-purple flowers of *Salvia* 'Amistad' were threaded through the border but were found to be too dark. "They're too sombre for this border," says Stewart. "A beautiful plant, but not quite right for here." His meticulous and detailed plantsmanship pervades the garden.

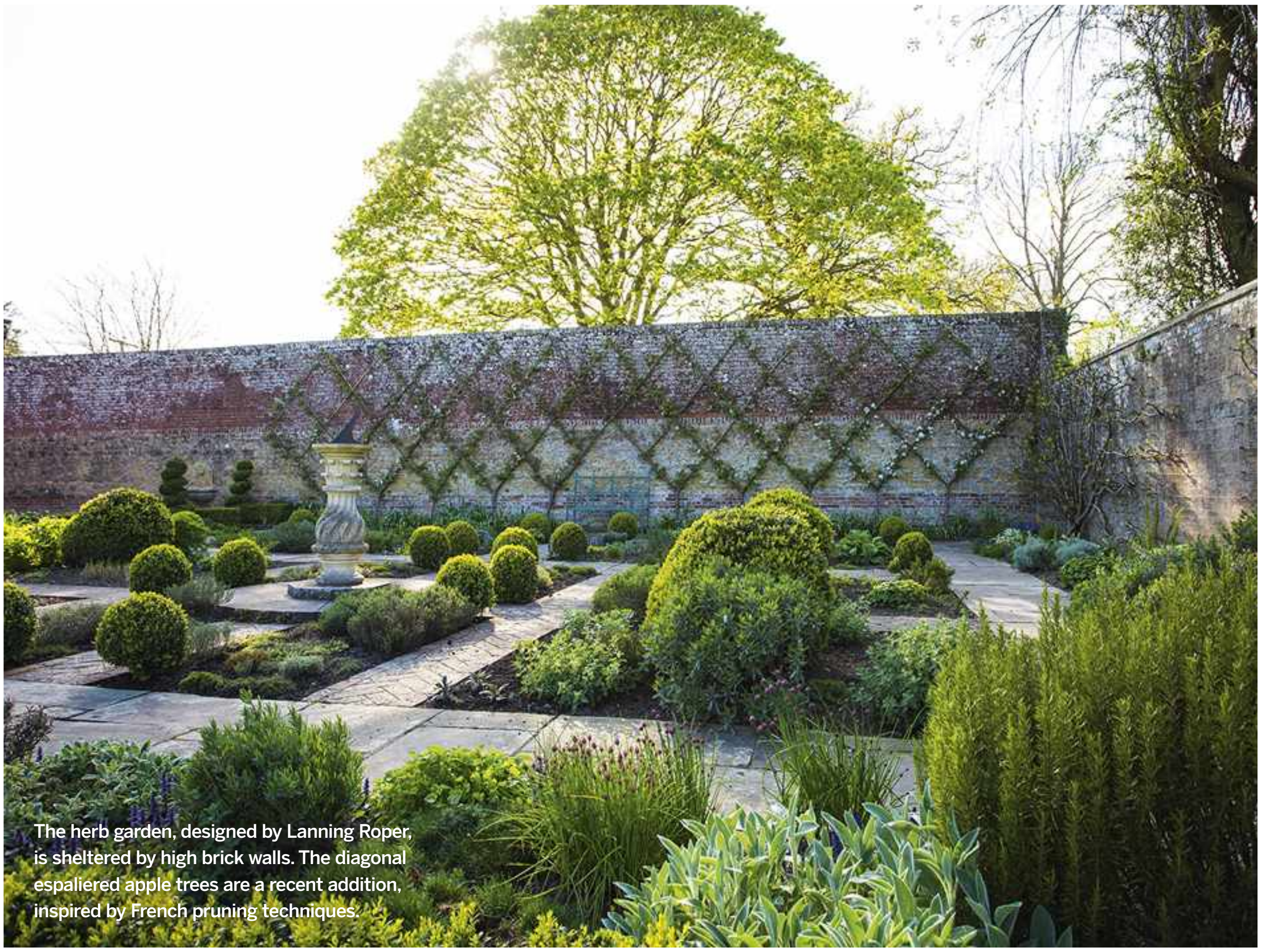
An old, walled garden adjacent to the double border was divided into rooms, each with a different atmosphere. A formal herb garden, which has the recent addition of a lattice of espaliered apple trees as a background, leads through to a swimming ▷

The vegetable garden's brick paths are lined with columns of Ballerina apple trees that were planted 25 years ago. Regular pruning ensures a good fruit crop.

Water ripples across the reflective surface of a sculpture by William Pye. The artwork marks the spot where an enormous cedar of Lebanon once stood.



The fountain garden is planted as a colour wheel, with flowers and foliage blending through the spectrum from pinks and reds through to indigo.



The herb garden, designed by Lanning Roper, is sheltered by high brick walls. The diagonal espaliered apple trees are a recent addition, inspired by French pruning techniques.

Very occasionally, a garden calls you back, singing out of something that is beyond its design, its setting and its structure

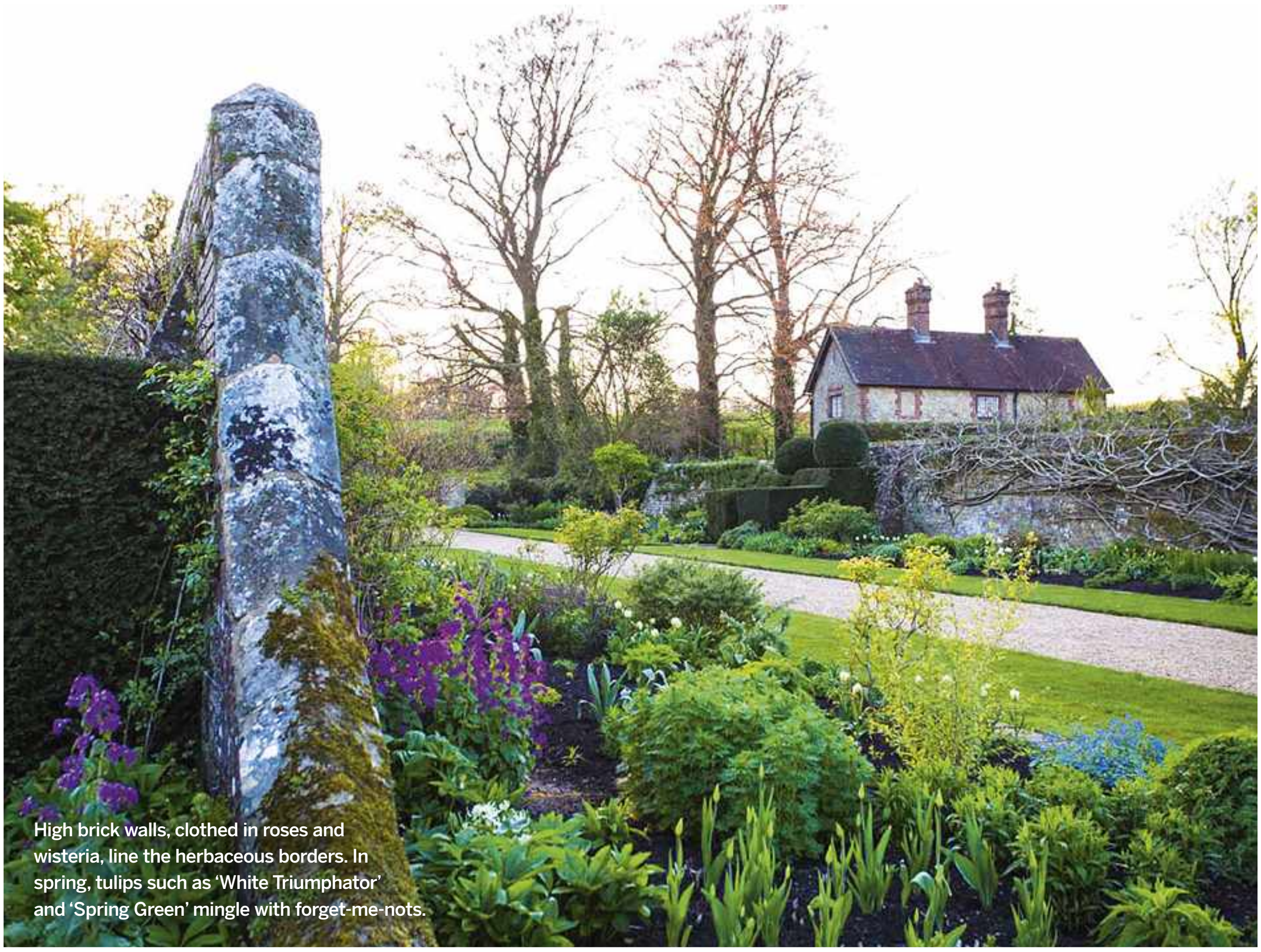
▷ pool and orangerie, designed by architect Philip Jebb. A potager, flanked by tall columns of Ballerina apple trees and obelisks of sweet peas and runner beans, encloses jovial plantings of coloured salads over which presides a topiary bird. The path from here leads on to a series of rooms. A relaxing gold and green colour scheme with *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata', underplanted with astrantia, hostas and mathiasella, leads on to another room where the exuberant planting follows the colour wheel and annuals, such as *Nicotiana mutabilis*, are allowed to gently self-seed among the alliums, roses and perennials.

A short walk from the main garden is a woodland dell and water garden begun in the late 1990s with the help of designers Isabel and Julian Bannerman. The garden continues to grow. One of the most recent developments, tucked away to one side, evokes the terraced Provençal landscape where Simon and Stewart spent holidays. Away from the house the garden melts into a relaxed informality. Enormous oriental plane trees have layered themselves, serpent-like, in the rough grass where *Campanula latifolia* has been encouraged to colonise. For years, Stewart and Simon collected their seeds and scattered them each year by hand.

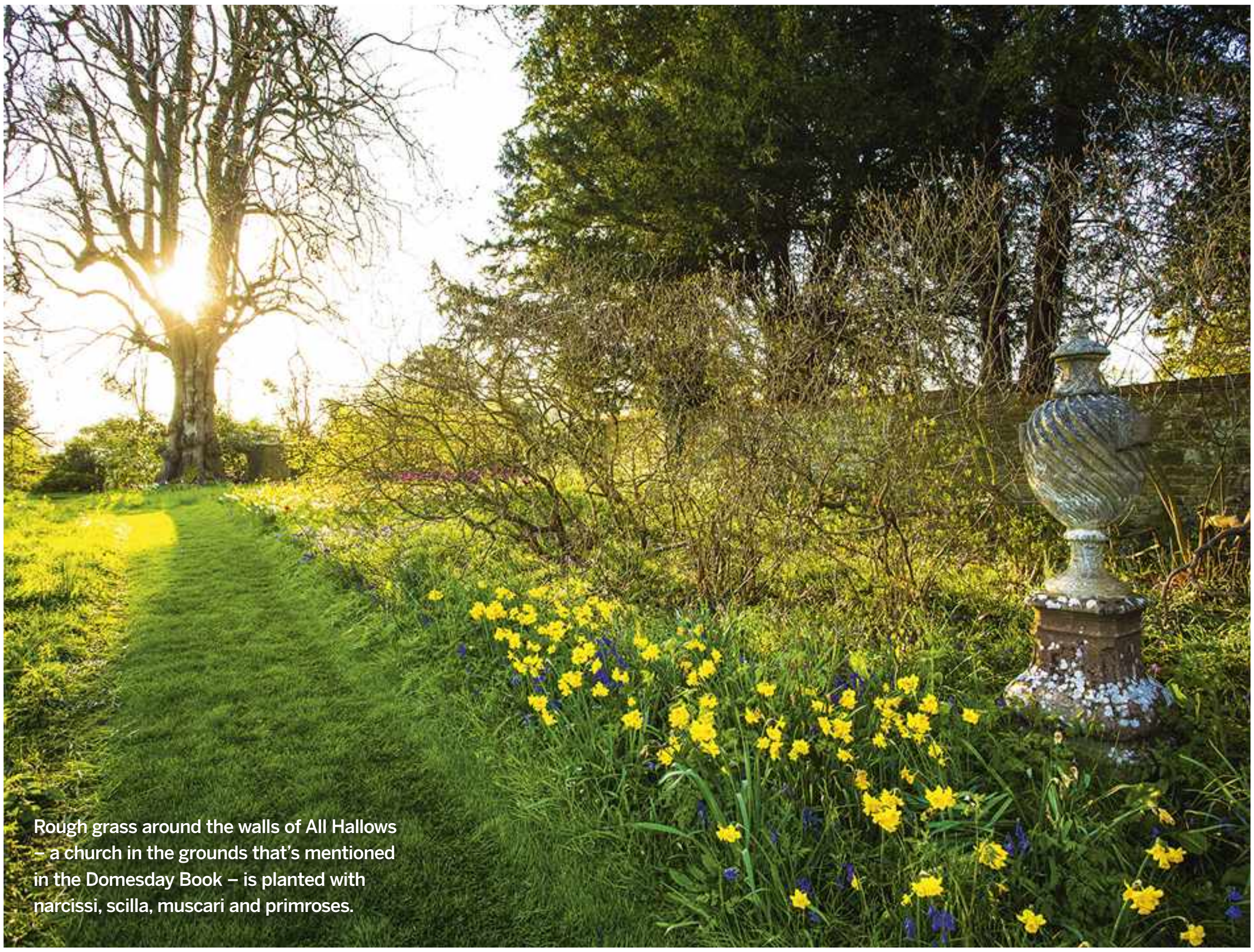
Stewart's knowledge of plants, and his discriminating eye in combining them, is impressive. Where, I wonder, does that come from? "As a young man I was a scientist, a botanist," he says. "I spent a lot of time looking at plants through the lens of a microscope – not that much use in gardening." Of much more use is a lifetime of visiting gardens, looking at paintings and sculpture (Simon was one of the country's most important art collectors) and books, "books and reading". Stewart's garden library encompasses old treatises by long-forgotten ▷

A gravel pathway, flanked by yew cones and enclosed by yew hedges, provides a calming link between the exuberance of the garden rooms.

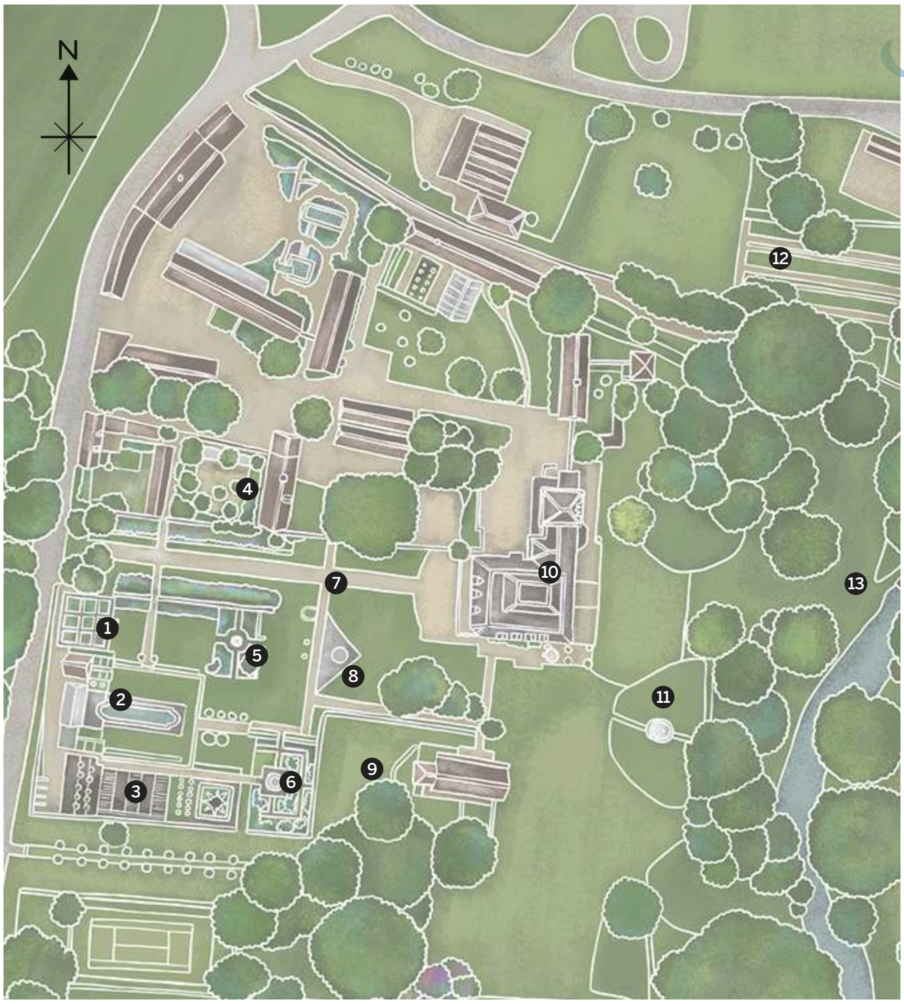
Two colossal oriental plane trees have layered themselves into the moist earth and now resemble fossilised serpents. In summer they are surrounded by *Campanula latifolia*.



High brick walls, clothed in roses and wisteria, line the herbaceous borders. In spring, tulips such as 'White Triumphator' and 'Spring Green' mingle with forget-me-nots.



Rough grass around the walls of All Hallows – a church in the grounds that's mentioned in the Domesday Book – is planted with narcissi, scilla, muscari and primroses.



HANNAH McVICAR

GARDEN PLAN

1 Herb garden
2 Orangerie and swimming pool
3 Vegetable garden
4 Greenhouse garden
5 Well garden
6 Fountain garden
7 Double herbaceous border
8 Reflecting water sculpture
9 All Hallows church
10 House
11 Temple to tulip tree
12 Provençal garden
13 Riverside walk

▷ authors, plant monographs and the latest offerings on planting styles. Many volumes are dog-eared with use and most have pieces of paper marking important passages or interesting photographs.

Like many gardeners, I visit dozens of gardens each year and, very occasionally, a garden calls you back, singing out of something that is beyond its design, its setting and its structure; beyond its planting, its colour schemes and its horticulture. It is true that this garden has been shaped by important designers; that the connoisseurship of the owners permeates the garden; that its setting is one of the loveliest valleys in Sussex. All this goes to making Woolbeding the apotheosis of 20th-century gardening. But gardens also embrace the stories of their creators and these gardens are a testament to a remarkable partnership, whose vitality, grace and discernment pervades the garden: you see and feel it everywhere. And this is what sets Woolbeding apart. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Woolbeding, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9RR.

Tel 0844 249 1895, nationaltrust.org.uk/woolbeding-gardens

Open Thursdays and Fridays from 9 April until end September. Visits must be pre-booked.

Discover more about the garden in: *A Garden in Sussex* photographs by Tessa Traeger, foreword by Stewart Grimshaw (Cuckoo Press for John Sandoe Ltd, 2008).

9 of Stewart's favourite plants

1 *Daphne × transatlantica* Eternal Fragrance (= 'Blafra')
A highly scented and floriferous daphne that forms a neat dome. Grows to 90cm. RHS H4, USDA 8b-9b[†].

2 *Mathiasella bupleuroides* 'Green Dream'
Clusters of nodding, jade-green bells look cool and fresh until June. In autumn, foliage turns copper and bronze. 1m. RHS H4.

3 *Clematis alpina* 'Pamela Jackman'
Blooms early and is smothered in flowers up to 8cm wide. A vigorous and tough plant, it will survive the severest winters. 2.5m. AGM[*]. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *Erythronium* 'Pagoda'
Easy to grow, with large, leathery leaves and delicate, lemon-yellow flowers. In cold weather the foliage has a bronze sheen. 35cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

5 *Magnolia denudata* Yellow River (= 'Fei Huang')
Buds have a yellow tinge, but flowers are a soft buttery-cream colour. Later-flowering than some magnolias so the blooms often escape being burned by frost. 6m. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

6 *Tiarella* 'Spring Symphony'
In cool, shady situations it is semi-evergreen with purple-bronze foliage in the winter. 20cm. RHS H7, USDA 5b-9b.

7 *Fritillaria persica*
At Woolbeding the spires of smoky, plum-coloured bells need to be protected from strong winds. 75cm. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

8 *Ipheion* 'Alberto Castillo'
Grey leaves appear at the end of December followed by sparkling-white, starry flowers in spring. Dies back in the summer. Quickly forms large colonies. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

9 *Corydalis temulifolia* 'Chocolate Stars'
A stunning plant with rust-coloured leaves that have a serrated edge. The pale lavender-blue flowers appear in spring. 40cm. RHS H4, USDA 8a-9b.

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[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

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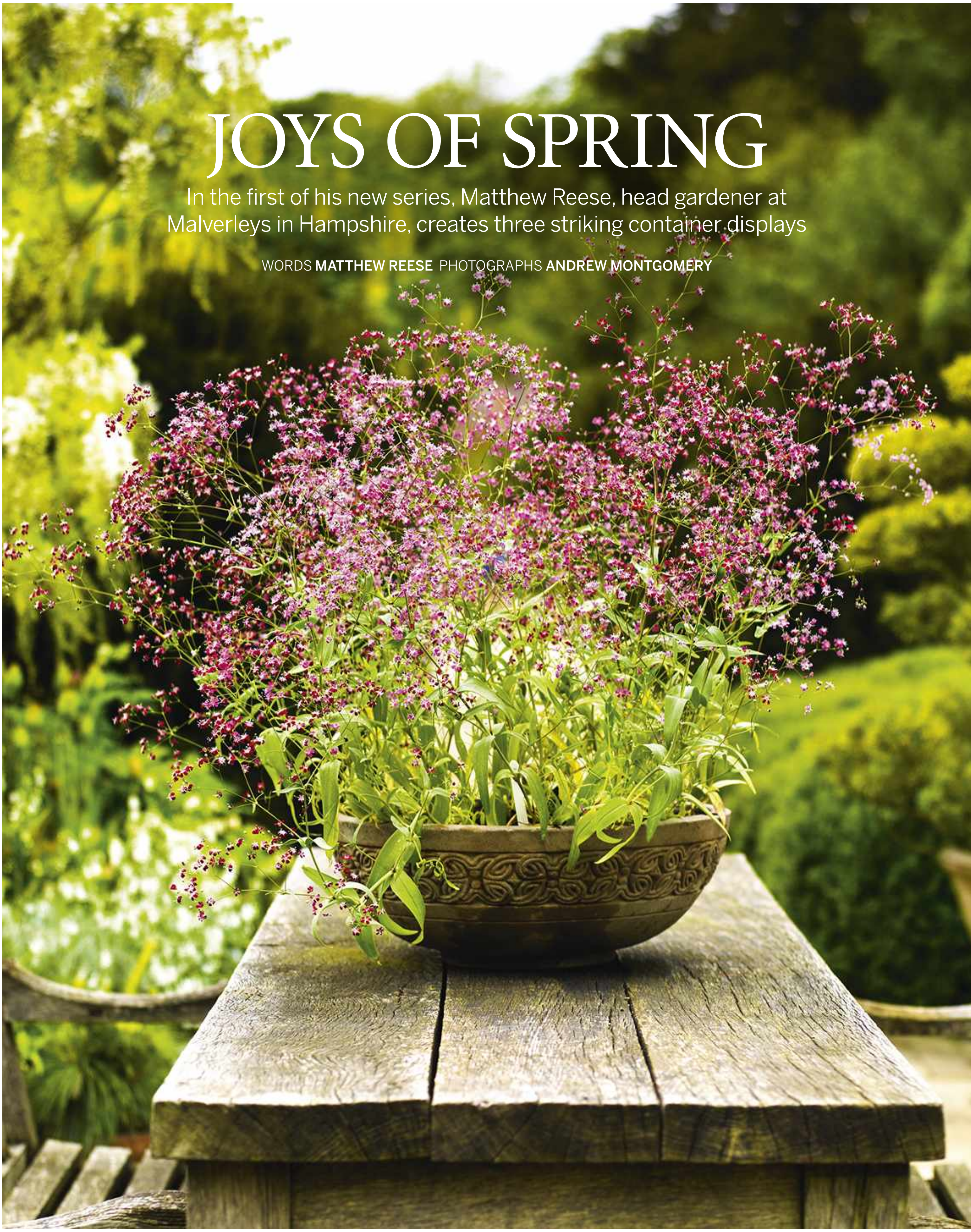

JOYS OF SPRING

In the first of his new series, Matthew Reese, head gardener at Malverleys in Hampshire, creates three striking container displays

WORDS **MATTHEW REESE** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Bowled over

I often bed out the pretty *Gypsophila elegans* 'Kermesina' in the garden but I tend to keep a few back in 9cm pots, rather than move them on into larger pots. Keeping the pot size restricted causes them to bolt and flower sooner. Also having lots of plants in smaller pots gives me greater freedom when I'm putting displays together. In the house, I sometimes arrange them in a line along a mantelpiece or windowsill or en masse in a larger pot. Here, I have put this bowl in an elevated position – quite high on an oak table, so the eye can appreciate its lovely shape and decoration. I also like the way the base disappears into the shadow cast by the bowl on the table.

How to achieve the look

Cultivation and care

Unfortunately, this bowl has only one drainage hole, so we have to take extra measures to accommodate this shortfall. First, I placed two small crocks (pieces of broken pot) loosely over the hole, then over the crocks I mounded up a handful of sharp gravel to form a cone. This provides a larger surface area and much better drainage – alpine plant enthusiasts often employ this method to achieve good drainage. Be careful not to unsettle the gravel when filling the pot with compost. I position the tallest plants to the centre and work outwards, blending the wiry branching inflorescences from one neighbour on to the next, gradually building a swarm of tiny, rose-pink flowers. As I'm planting, I add discreet twigs to support the stems and add the bushiest plants last so they drape over the edge.

Container

We bought this bowl at an auction and I love it as much for its shape as its decoration. It is attributed to the Compton Pottery and around the side it has a Celtic love-knot band that hints of influence from Arts and Crafts designer Archibald Knox, who worked occasionally with the pottery founder, Mary Watts. Compton pots have become highly collectable and therefore can demand high prices but they do still come up in salerooms and at car boot sales for a reasonable price.

Plants

1 *Gypsophila elegans* 'Kermesina'
An annual from the Caucasus. Will flower in early spring from overwintered plants. *G. elegans* 'Kermesina' is the pink form and is shorter than the more commonly grown white-flowered version. In this pot I have used 16 plants. Grows to 50cm high x 30cm wide.

Suppliers

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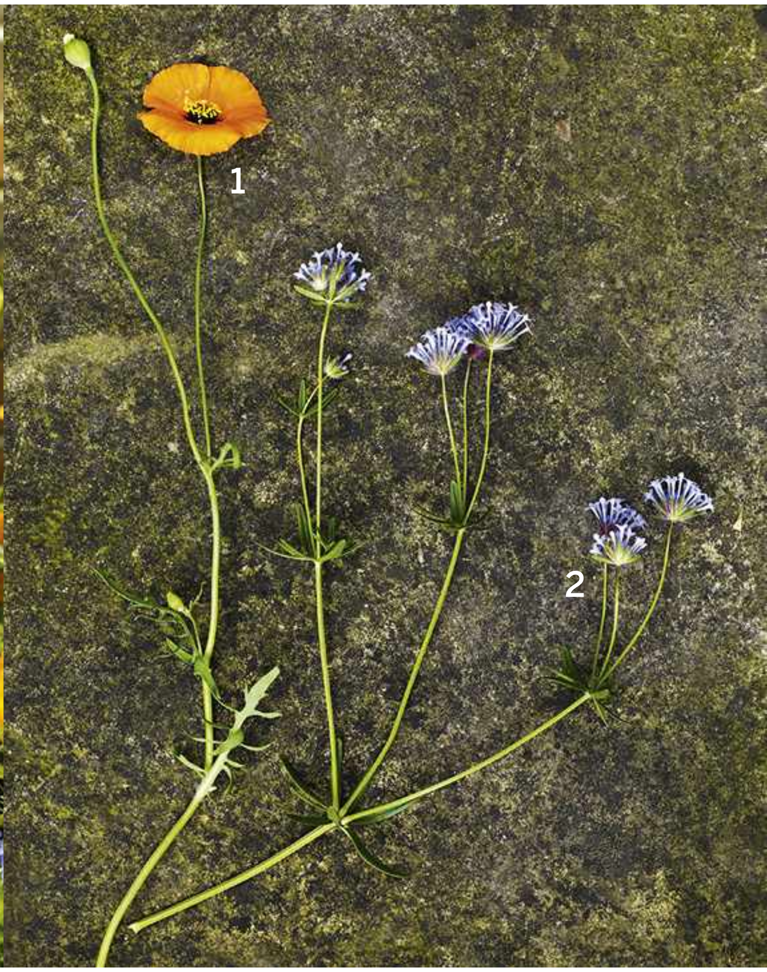
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.



All aflutter

I remember the first time I saw the flowers of the *Stylomecon heterophylla* (wind poppy) unfurling from a typical poppy bud and being captivated by the unusual burnt-orange colour. The flowers are composed of thin, satin-textured petals, held well above brittle, blue-green foliage on slender stems. They are never still and always skittish. It only takes a whisper of wind and they'll come alive, hence the common name. Also, somewhat surprisingly for such a showy flower, it's mildly scented – reminiscent of lily of the valley. The poppies are planted randomly through the tank and I have woven *Asperula orientalis* (blue woodruff) between them.

How to achieve the look

Cultivation and care

I make sure I use the whole of the container and plant right to the lip, so the plants spill over and soften the edge. The tiny sky-blue flowers and fresh spring-green foliage of the blue woodruff are a good foil and contrast well against the larger poppy flowers. This attractive, little-used procumbent plant is well worth growing and is equally useful in the garden for weaving between perennials as it is in containers.

Both of these plants shed their petals discreetly so no dead heading is necessary. They do, however, need support and I have provided this using a delicate skeleton of twigs – the tips of hazel or hornbeam are good. Add them in soon after planting, and they will quickly disappear as they are consumed by the foliage.

Container

This lead water tank had been loitering behind the glasshouse since I arrived at Malverleys four years ago. We put it next to the entrance of the walled garden on a pair of York stone slabs. It makes the perfect host for plants; it looks good and is deep enough to hold a good amount of soil so watering is not a major concern. To encourage sharp drainage, I have filled the bottom third with broken pots, and then topped it up with John Innes No.2, lightened with peat at a ratio of 5:1.

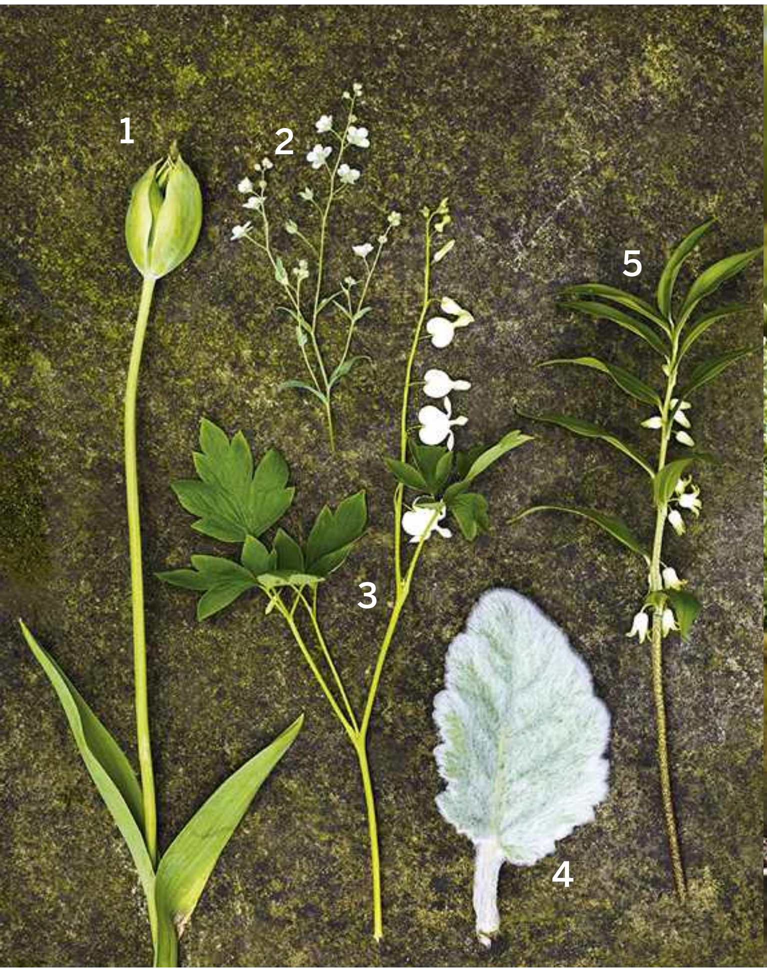
Plants

1 *Stylomecon heterophylla* 'Copper Queen'

A selection of a Californian annual that can be easily grown from seed. Autumn-sown plants flower in spring; spring-sown in the summer. I've used five plants here. 50cm x 30cm.

2 *Asperula orientalis*

Spreading annual with vivid green foliage and tiny, blue flowers. Sow in autumn under glass for early plants. 11 plants. 30cm x 30cm.



Jolly good show

At Malverleys, I like to embellish paved areas of the garden with seasonal pot displays – an idea inherited from working at Great Dixter. Plants are put into terracotta pots, preferably old and weathered, and positioned in groups next to doorways, on steps, near a table, or somewhere they can be enjoyed and easily maintained. To prevent the show from being too fussy, each pot is restricted to one species. This also enables you to add new plants and subtract older plants when they have gone over, without upsetting the arrangement too much. This display is in the White Garden beneath a wisteria, where I use a limited palette of grey, green and white hues along with different shapes and textures to make the show interesting.

How to achieve the look

Cultivation and care

Only five plants are highlighted (above), but these are woven into a larger display. I make sure larger plants go towards the back, lifting them on bricks so they're not hidden, with small plants at the front and a mixture of sizes in the middle. *Beschorneria septentrionalis*, with its stiff, sword-shaped leaves makes a strong focal point at the back. If it were removed, the focus would shift to the fat, silvery leaves of the *Salvia argentea*, so I keep these elements apart to maintain balance.

In the centre, the perpendicular stems and oval flowers of *Tulipa* 'Evergreen' contrast with the cloud of small flowers and glaucous leaves of the *Omphalodes linifolia*. Next to the *Beschorneria*, a small *Aralia elata* 'Variegata' with sparse, leafy branches reaches above the compact, prickly *Berkheya purpurea*. At the front is the rigid succulent *Echeveria secunda* with a bloomy texture. Beside it is *Artemisia schmidtiana* 'Nana'. Above this is a *Disporopsis pernyi* with upright, curved stems bearing white, pendent flowers, and next to this is a dwarf *Pinus strobus* 'Nana' with long, pendent strands of thin silvery needles. Then, *Astelia banksii* with clean, upward slivers of glistening silver, and beyond is *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* 'Alba', its arching racemes decked in pendent, white flowers showing up well against the yew.

Plants

1 *Tulipa* 'Evergreen'
This green-flowered tulip is the longest flowering of all tulips and can go on for two months – it should be more widely grown. 25 bulbs/pot. 60cm high.

2 *Omphalodes linifolia*
Charming annual with forget-me-not flowers in pure white. 12 plants/pot. 40cm x 25cm. AGM*.

3 *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* 'Alba'
Very elegant, white-flowered form of the bleeding heart (formerly known as *Dicentra spectabilis* 'Alba'). Three plants/pot. 50cm x 40cm. AGM.

4 *Salvia argentea*
A biennial, grown chiefly for its foliage, which is best in the first year. Three plants/pot. 50cm x 30cm.

5 *Disporopsis pernyi*
A slowly spreading woodland perennial, with glossy foliage and pendent, white flowers. Three plants/pot. 30cm high.

Ground cover

The plants used to help hide bare soil and suppress weeds can also help unify a garden space and be a beautiful addition to any planting scheme

WORDS **CHRIS MARCHANT**

Liriope muscari
Useful evergreen plant that slowly expands to form a dense thatch of strappy, dark-green foliage. Late-season, purple flowers are more abundant in a sunny aspect, although will tolerate dappled shade. Equally at home in formal or informal schemes. 50cm x 30cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 6a-10b†. M††

GAP PHOTOS/VISIONS

Chris Marchant is the co-owner of Orchard Dene Nurseries in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, a wholesale grower specialising in herbaceous plants.

Mention the words ground-cover planting in some circles and a flicker book of dull, static planting vignettes starts to roll out, shaped by demands for a robust, amenity response. This may apply when imagination and resources are low, but really there is no justification for it being offered as a generic response to massed planting. What distinguishes ground cover from other forms of planting is the need for dual purpose: beauty and function. Good ground cover must colonise with selected desirables, which by their growth and presence preclude seeding and ingress of any undesirables – the noxious weeds.

Like most gardeners, I strive to balance the desire for a beautiful garden and a dearth of time to devote to it. Any techniques that reduce the chore of weeding are welcomed, provided presentation is not unduly compromised. Ground cover appeals in this context, but I don't see it as a licence to neglect. Despite its perception as a labour-saving device, once installed, ground cover planting can't be left totally unattended. But, with careful selection and grouping, levels of intervention should be light and infrequent.

An important pre-requisite is the subject's ability to produce plenty of leaves, obscuring light from the soil beneath and preventing chance germination of weeds. At the close of the year, deciduous leaves may be left to mulch their own space, locking fertility into the soil, excluding light from any chance seedlings and fostering conditions conducive to reliable regrowth the following spring. Easy when plants are thriving, but where plants struggle to survive in poor ground, or with inadequate light, then sparse growth leaves dangerous scope for weeds to pierce the protective green shield.

All successful planting is about balance – a balance between horizontal and vertical planes; small and large leaves, between solids and spaces. With the right balance, planting compositions can be atmospheric and ▷

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available
†† Vigour rating: S = slow, M = medium, A = aggressive.

▷ beautiful. Consider your response to a massed bluebell wood, or a lush grassy meadow. Effectively your visual sense is panning back from minute detail to appreciate the bigger picture. It is here that ground cover can play a part in heightened enjoyment of your garden, taking you in and out of focus as seasonal highlights reach flowering perfection and then fade. The addition of grasses to a ground-cover palette adds movement and grace, with light breezes gently bending seedheads or rustling foliage.

Founding rules of planting still apply. Selected ground-cover species should suit both soil and aspect, but arranging plants in lasting compositions demands an appreciation of compatible growth habits and vigour. I rank ground cover along a scale of vigour, from ‘rudely robust’ to ‘essentially decorative’. Truly aggressive plants, for example, *Trachystemon orientalis* (see page 55) appear very much at the rude end of the scale. As such, they are invaluable to colonise poor ground and best used on their own. *Petasites japonicus*, *Darmera peltata* and *Symphytum grandiflorum* are similarly strong candidates for monoculture. Somewhat less aggressive, but as effective in colonisation of ground to the exclusion of others, are some of the stoloniferous *Epimedium. E. grandiflorum*, *E. perralderianum*, *E.* x *perralchicum* and *E.* x *versicolor* types offer a ‘slow burn’ coverage, but once established, their congested mat of growth effectively excludes any interlopers. Such qualities make them an ideal underplanting to woodland shrubs, or woodland edge.

Nearer the middle of the scale, plants of similar vigour can be used in partnership to give oscillating peaks to the season; when one is in full display, the other is resting. *Hosta* ‘Devon Green’ (page 54), which works well with *Digitalis lutea*, or *Teucrium scorodonia* ‘Crispum’ (page 54) with *Geranium pyrenaicum* ‘Bill Wallis’ and *Viola riviniana* Purpurea Group.

Gentle plants with slow, expansive growth that migrate across a space to colonise new ground, can be used in painterly compositions without fear any one will obliterate the others. *Mukdenia rossii* ‘Karasuba’ (page 55)with *Heuchera cylindrica* and woodland grass *Melica altissima* ‘Alba’ make a fine partnership.

• Chris’s recommendations for ground cover continue over the next six pages.

Sunny selection

***Acaena inermis* ‘Purpurea’**
Loosely meshed, purple foliage forms a flowing carpet from May until August. Creamy-white, flower heads give way to coppery-brown seedheads. Thrives in dry, sunny aspects. 10cm x 30cm. RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b. A.

***Aster pyrenaeus* ‘Lutetia’**
Mildew-resistant, persistent and vigorous, even in lean soils. Bears lilac-pink flowers from August to October. Good with silver aromatics, such as lavender. 65cm x 75cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b. M.

***Stachys officinalis* ‘Hummelo’**
Neat mounds of serrated green foliage frame abundant spikes of rosy-purple flowers from June. If spent flowers are trimmed back, a second flush takes up the display during September. 55cm x 55cm. RHS H5. S-M.

***Persicaria affinis* ‘Darjeeling Red’**
Tolerant of dry conditions in both sun and light shade, this plant with fine, glossy foliage colonises new ground through adventitious roots on running stems to form a dense mat. 25cm x 40cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b. A.

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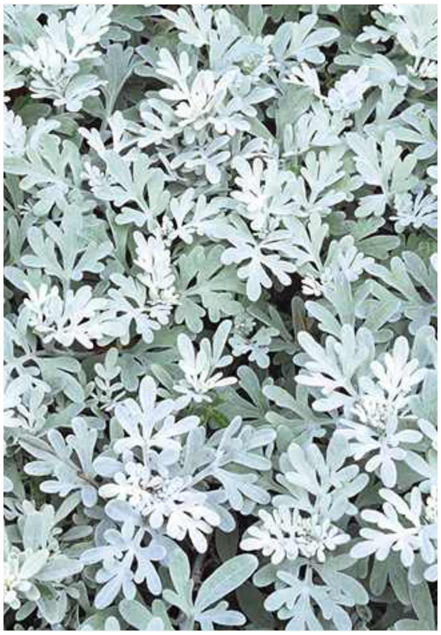
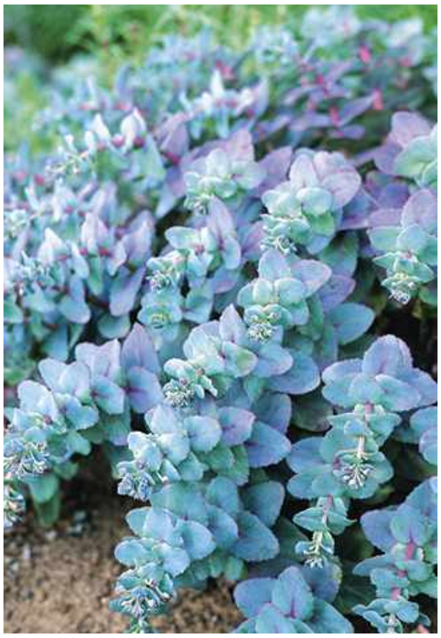
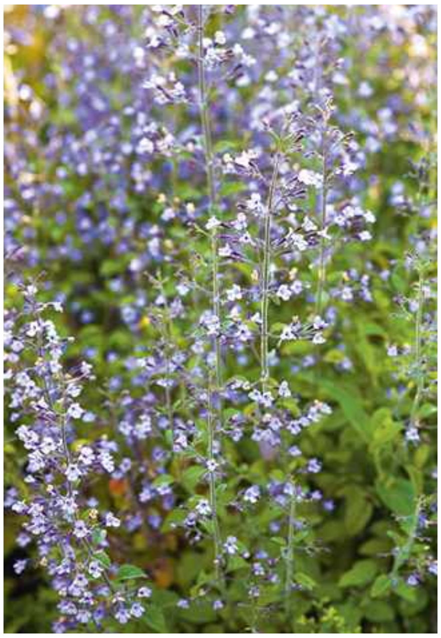


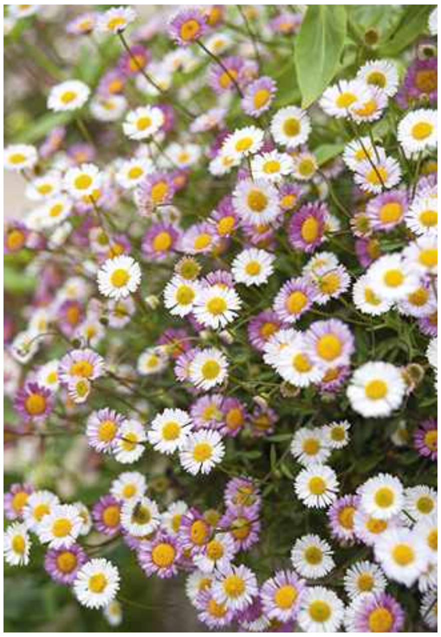
Artemisia stelleriana **'Boughton Silver'**
Silver-felted, oak-like leaves on lax prostrate stems form a dense, low-maintenance carpet. Stud with *Allium cernuum* to add another layer of colour once the yellow flowers die down. 20cm x 40cm. RHS H4, USDA 3a-8b. M.



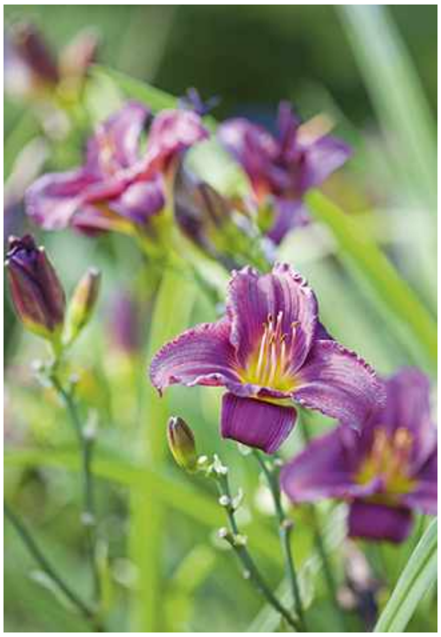
Sedum telephium **subsp.** ***ruprechtii***
Slumped stems bear grey-green foliage, contrasting with flat heads of creamy-buff flowers. In autumn, foliage turns burgundy and flower heads achieve a gold colouring. 40cm x 50cm. RHS H4, USDA 3a-9a. A.



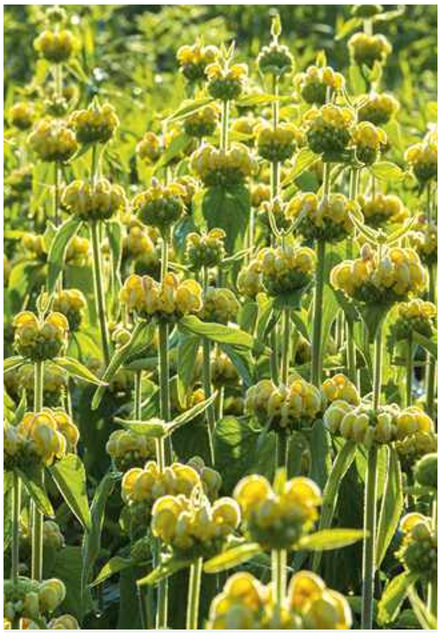
Calamintha nepeta **'Blue Cloud'**
Drought-tolerant floriferous plant for gravel, scree or rose underplanting. Peppermint-scented foliage is topped by a froth of tiny, lavender-blue flowers June to September. 40cm x 40cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b. S-M.



Erigeron karvinskianus
Known as the wall daisy, for its capacity to cling to a vertical surface, it will survive in the leanest, driest soil. A prolific, self-seeding habit ensures regeneration, even after cold winters. 30cm x 35cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b. A.



Hemerocallis **'Little Grapette'**
This shorter, multi-headed form has a long season of purple flowers and neat, strappy foliage that matures to bright autumnal yellow. Works well in massed effect. 45cm x 50cm. RHS H3, USDA 4a-10b. M.



Phlomis russeliana
Large, grey-green-felted leaves form an expansive basal mound, while hooded, lemon flowers ascend in whorls from June onwards. Attractive winter structure. 90cm x 65cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b. A.

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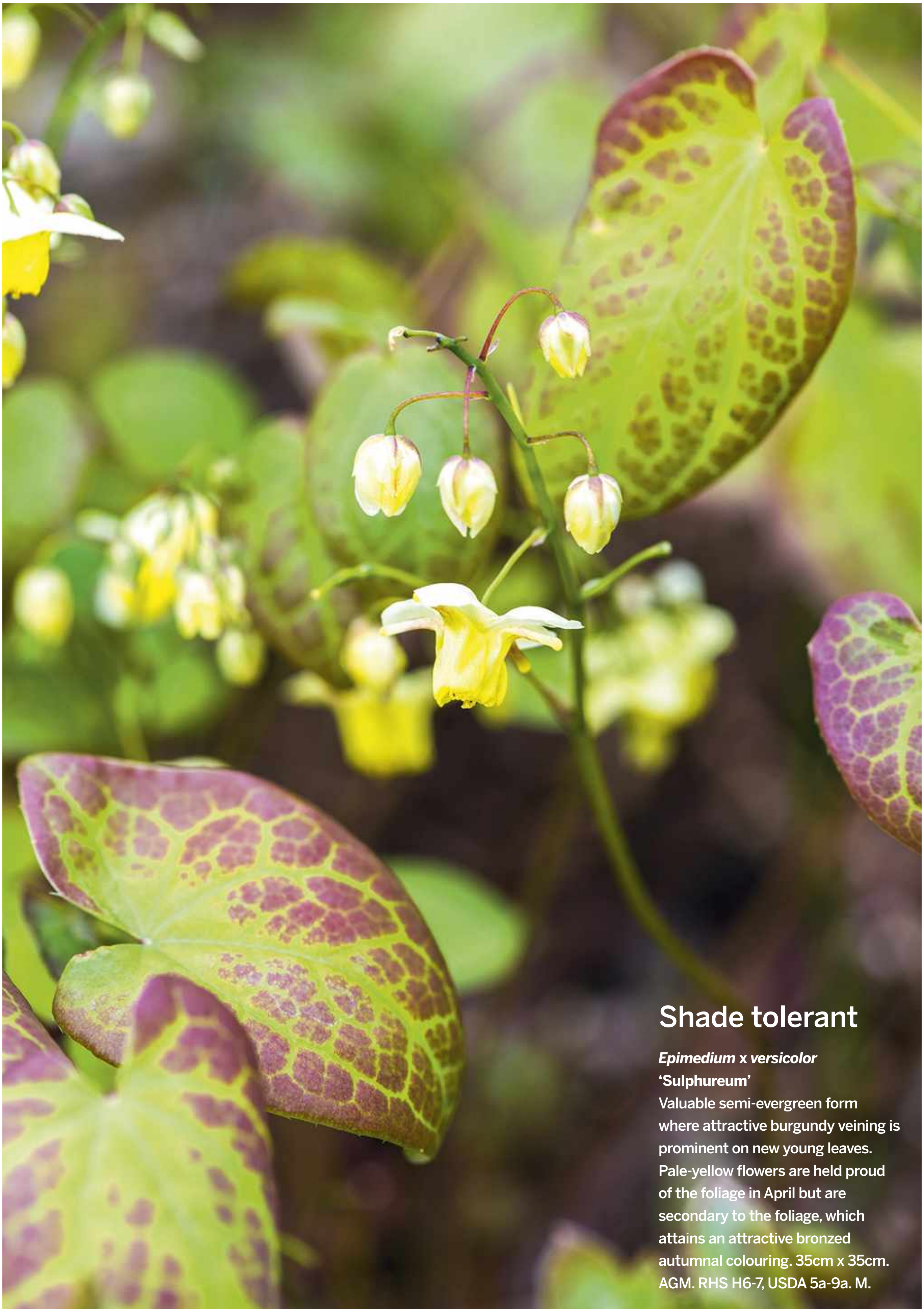
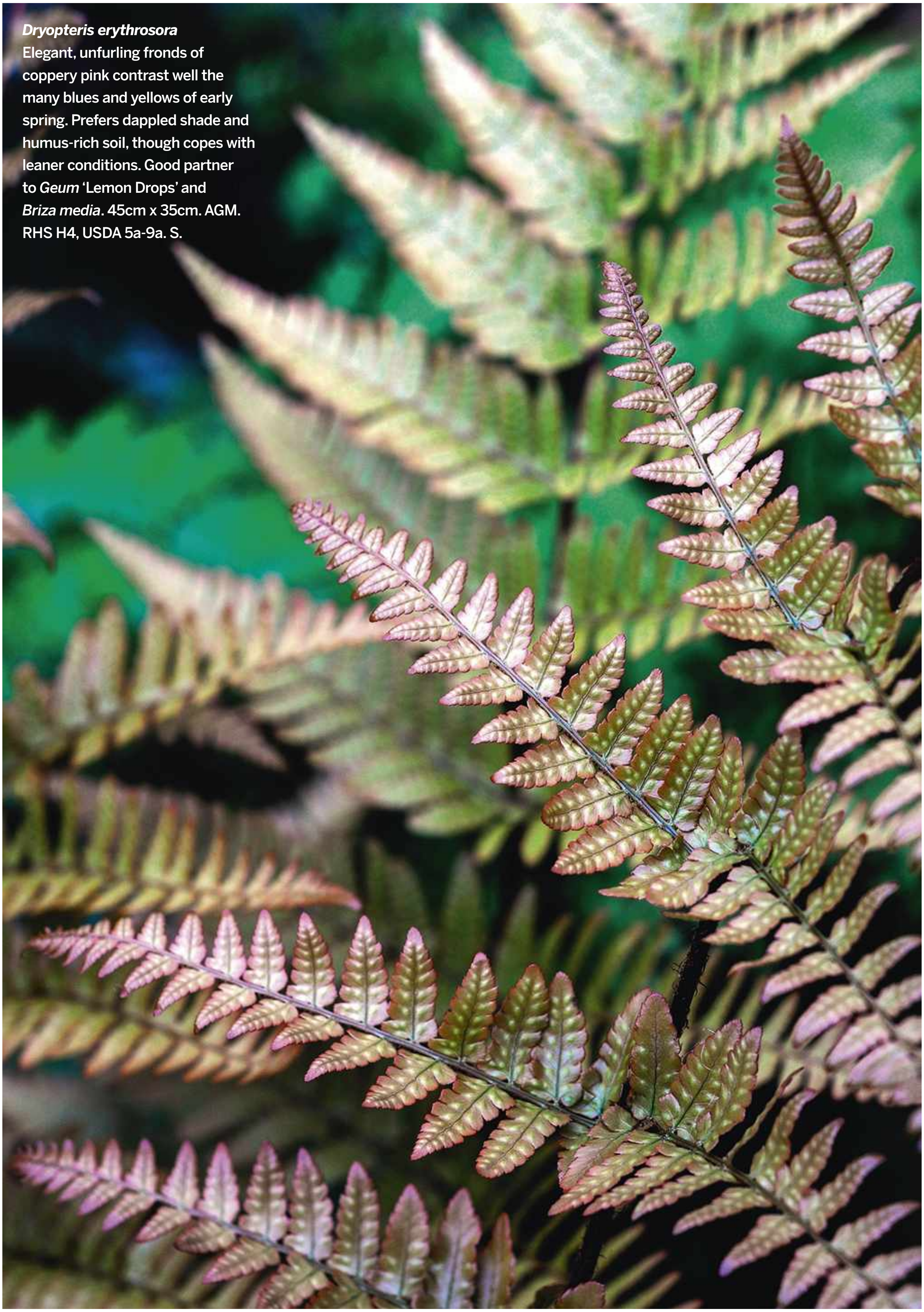


Shade tolerant

Epimedium* x *versicolor
'Sulphureum'
Valuable semi-evergreen form where attractive burgundy veining is prominent on new young leaves. Pale-yellow flowers are held proud of the foliage in April but are secondary to the foliage, which attains an attractive bronzed autumnal colouring. 35cm x 35cm. AGM. RHS H6-7, USDA 5a-9a. M.

GAP PHOTOS/JOANNA KOSSAK



Dryopteris erythrosora
Elegant, unfurling fronds of coppery pink contrast well the many blues and yellows of early spring. Prefers dappled shade and humus-rich soil, though copes with leaner conditions. Good partner to *Geum* 'Lemon Drops' and *Briza media*. 45cm x 35cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9a. S.

RM FLORAL / ALAMY

Combinations

Sunny outlook Flowering roses are a joy, but need complementary underplanting to support the rest of the year. Neutral or subdued shades – silvers, creams, greens and soft blues – can be used to successfully unite a melange of mixed rose colours. Longevity of flowering is crucial and while classic *Nepeta* combinations are deservedly popular, they need cutting back at the end of June to stimulate a second flush. Repeat-flowering roses have much more to give at this point, so reliable alternatives are needed to take up the flowering theme.

Recommended rose associates include *Calamintha nepeta*, *Artemisia stelleriana* 'Boughton Silver' (page 51) and *Erigeron karvinskianus* (page 51). Valuable evergreen detail is found in *Teucrium* x *lucidrys* and *Euphorbia myrsinites*, while the grasses *Stipa calamagrostis* and *Stipa lessingiana* add movement and vertical interest.

The following combinations will grace any sunny open aspect – the inclusion of a grass in each extends interest beyond high summer.

Combination 1 *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Mainacht', *Artemisia stelleriana* 'Boughton Silver' (page 51), *Allium cernuum* and *Stipa calamagrostis*.

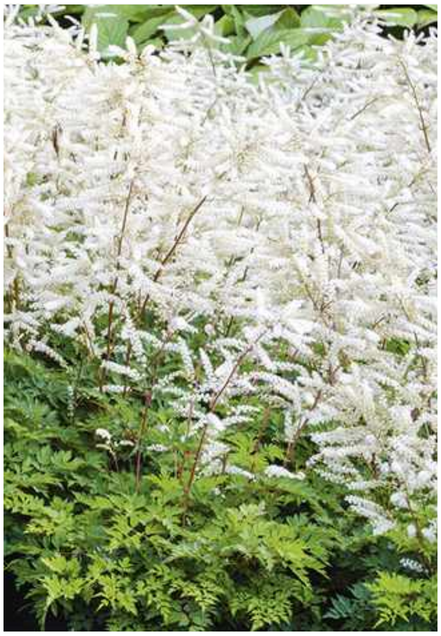
Combination 2 *Euphorbia seguieriana*, *Sesleria heufleriana*, *Sedum telephium* subsp. *ruprechtii* and *Origanum laevigatum* 'Herrenhausen'.

Shade Here foliage plays an important role since flowering detail is largely restricted to the spring. The following suggestions address both flower and foliage appeal to retain interest.

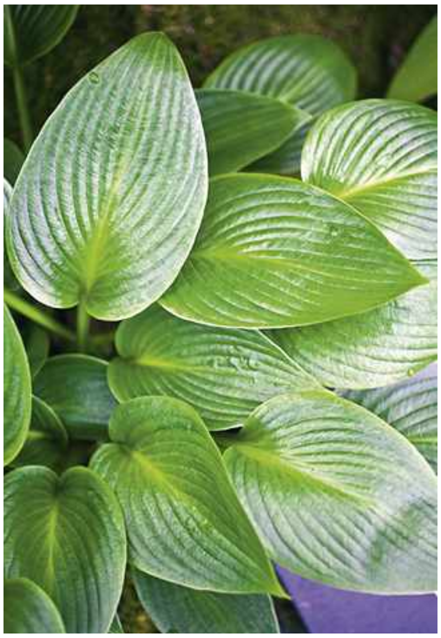
For light woodland edge *Teucrium scorodonia* 'Crispum' (right), *Dryopteris erythrosora* (page 53) and *Geranium phaeum* 'Samobor' (far right). For moisture retentive soils *Hosta* 'Devon Green' (right), *Mukdenia rossii* 'Karasuba' (far right) and *Aruncus* 'Guinea Fowl' (right) offer a long season.

Where a strong and robust planting response is appropriate, try a carpet of *Trachystemon orientalis* (far right) supported on the fringes by *Lunaria annua*. The latter's silver seeds will add light to the gloom of autumn when

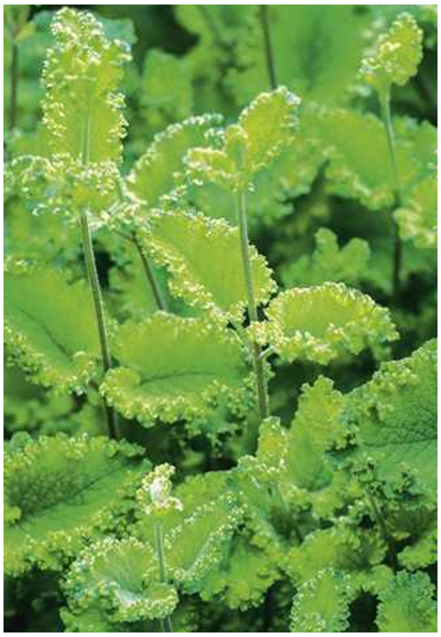
Shade tolerant



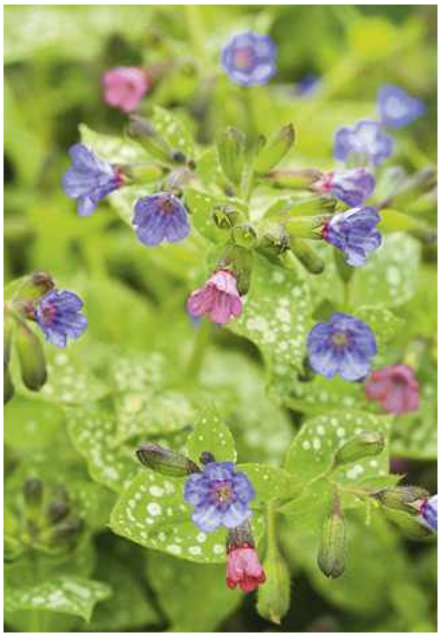
***Aruncus* 'Guinea Fowl'**
Tolerant of sun or light shade, preferring a moisture-retentive soil. Flowers open creamy white in June, fading gently to buff. Lime-green, ferny foliage contrasts with reddish stems. 45cm x 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b. S.



***Hosta* 'Devon Green'**
Glossy, elongated leaves of vibrant green emerge in April and expand to form flat circular rosettes. Foliage waxes to glowing yellow in autumn. Tolerant of average soil. 45cm x 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b. S.



***Teucrium scorodonia* 'Crispum'**
Sage-like green leaves have attractive tightly crimped margins, giving valuable textural variety. Durable and distinctive with simple, lime-green flower spikes that stand for many weeks. 40cm x 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 7a-11. M.



***Pulmonaria* 'Lewis Palmer'**
With electric-blue flowers and handsome, silver-spotted foliage it's happy in reasonably moisture-retentive soil. Trim off all the foliage after flowering to stimulate new leaf growth. 40cm x 45cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b. S.

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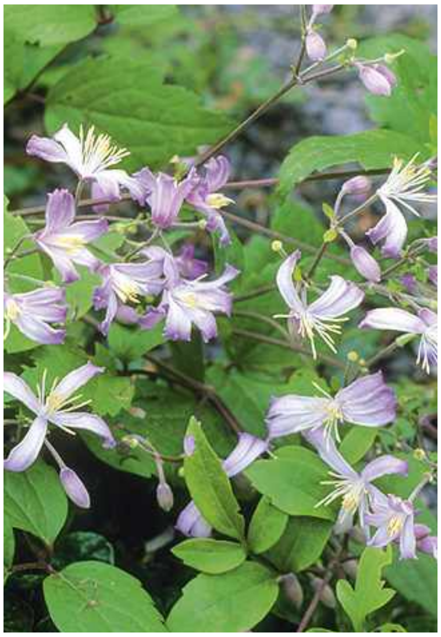
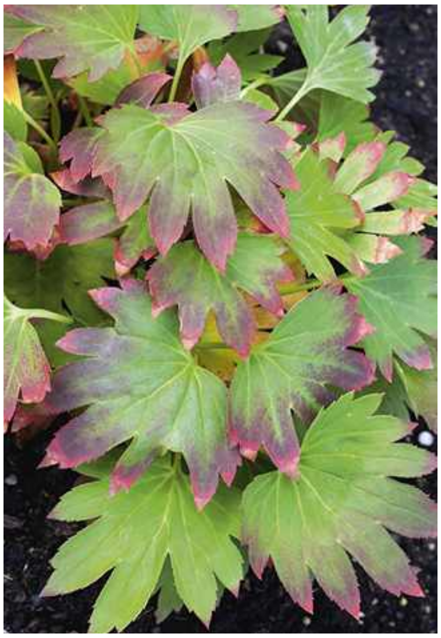
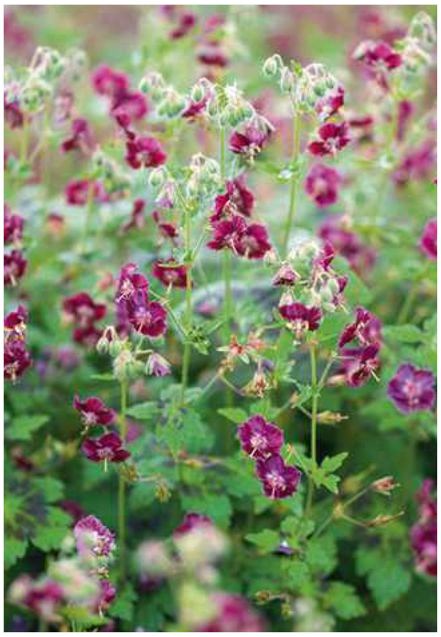


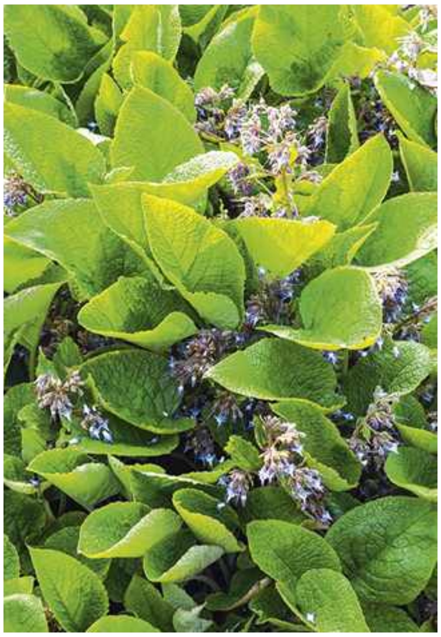
***Clematis* x *jouiniana* 'Praecox'**
Ascending woody stems terminate in clusters of scented, powder-blue flowers from late summer. Can be kept low to cover shady swathes at a woodland edge. 1.5-7m x 1.2- 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b. M.



***Mukdenia rossii* 'Karasuba'**
Simple sprays of white flowers in spring give way to vibrant autumnal red and bronze foliage. Grows best in moisture-retentive, humus-rich soil in dappled shade. 25cm x 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b. S.



***Geranium phaeum* 'Samobor'**
Pretty, nodding, claret-red flowers in spring, sit above attractively marked foliage that lasts late into autumn. An occasional *Helleborus foetidus* will add a bright, evergreen note. 65cm x 40cm. RHS H6-7, USDA 5a-7b. M.



Trachystemon orientalis
Will grow anywhere that large-scale coverage is required, but keep out of direct, prevailing winds. Borage-like, blue flowers appear in advance of the immense hairy, heart-shaped leaves. 45cm x 65cm. RHS H5, USDA 8b. A.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDREW LAWSON / THE GARDEN COLLECTION; GAP PHOTOS/FHF GREENMEDIA; GAP PHOTOS/PETER STANLEY; NIALL McDIARMID / ALAMY

other woodland flowers are finished. As the season unfolds, woodland bulbs can form an important component of ground cover. Their urgency to flower in the early spring stealing a march on the full expansion of ground-cover leaf canopy, adding pinpoints of colour at a time when there is little else.

Erythronium, *Iris tuberosa*, *Puschkinia* and *Scilla* all make fine early bulb choices for a lightly shaded woodland edge.

Cultivation

Sunny outlook Open, dry and sunny conditions support a broader range of plants if soil is open and aerated to keep microbial activity alive. Where sun is a constant, evaporation of precious moisture from the surface is reduced by the application of surface gravel or stone mulch. This also helps prevent a surface crust forming. Chance seedlings in these spaces are easily removed until the expanse of low, creeping foliage swells to precludes unwelcome interlopers.

Woodland/shade Thorough manual cultivation of the soil with incorporation of organic material to open the texture and increase moisture retention significantly adds to success.

Occasional feeding of the soil improves performance. A 5cm mulch of well-rotted manure and leaf mould (20/80 ratio) in spring will be taken down to the lower soil profile by worms, improving aeration and fertility.

Where to buy

- **Beth Chatto Nurseries**
  Elmstead Market, Colchester,
  Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk
- **The Plant Specialist**
  Whitefield Lane,
  Great Missenden HP16 0BH.
  Tel 01494 866650,
  theplantspecialist.co.uk

READER EVENT
Chris Marchant will host the opening-night discussion on Sissinghurst at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival. For details see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

Mick Evans

He's the modest maestro who's orchestrated the magnificent borders at Packwood House in Warwickshire with mathematical precision and exuberant creativity

WORDS CLAIRE MASSET PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Mick Evans will go down in garden history as the man who reinvented the borders at Packwood House. Just over ten years ago, he persuaded the National Trust to let him plant the scheme you see today. "I'm good at taking something that already exists and adding a bit of imagination," he says, far too modestly.

And what a scheme it is. Exuberant, bold and theatrical – these words have all been used – but such descriptions almost miss the point. Mick's creation is more subtle than its flamboyant appearance suggests. His compositions are meticulous, almost mathematical, and yet wonderfully artistic and satisfying. A bit like a Bach concerto.

This is a year of anniversaries for Mick, who celebrates 15 years as Packwood's head gardener and 25 years with the National Trust. Despite this lengthy tenure, he has the bright-eyed enthusiasm of a young lad. He probably displayed a similar joy when drawing with his father as a boy. "My dad was a commercial artist. I grew up on his shoulder as it were, drawing with him in his study."

So the seed was sown. Mick knew from a young age he wanted to 'do something creative', but his father dissuaded him from taking the commercial art route. A friend suggested gardening. "I went to the Job Centre and said I wanted to get into horticulture. London Borough of Ealing was offering apprenticeships, so I learned on the job." A few years later Mick became head foreman at King Edward VII Park in Wembley, north London. "I grew my own seeds, experimented with annuals and created herbaceous borders," he says. "I was always interested in more than I was expected to do."

Mick's thirst for knowledge led him to the most celebrated of English gardens, Sissinghurst. He learned from its gifted duo, Pamela Schwerdt and Sibylle Kreutzberger. "They were artists as well as gardeners. They taught me the importance of working with plants in their environment. Anything that was an alien colour in a scheme had to come out." He remembers Pam snapping two-thirds of the hosta flowers in the White Garden to create the right effect.

Leaving Sissinghurst, Mick embraced the drama of Powis Castle's Italianate terraces. As assistant head gardener to the talented 'Welsh wizard' Jimmy Hancock, he learned how to make the most of half hardies and annuals. Now, at Packwood, Mick feels he has "the best of both worlds". Although relatively small, the garden has the drama of Powis and the intimacy of Sissinghurst.

Historic gardens are clearly Mick's passion. "They already have great features: buildings, walls and even life within the walls." At Packwood his first focus was the Carolean Garden between the house and the famous Yew Garden. Poring over archives and old photographs, he realised that certain features had disappeared, including connecting pathways and the borders leading towards the terrace. So he reinstated them, and in doing so introduced cohesion.

Perhaps his greatest achievement was blending the planting and its environment. "I wanted to get a unity of colour and, to a certain extent, form. If you look at the terrace border in June, the colours of *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' marry beautifully with the copper beech of the parkland." Similarly, the grey of the lead drainpipes and silvery accents of the weathered oak window frames are repeated in the greys and silvers of the double borders. Rather than focus on individual elements, Mick likes to look at the bigger picture. "As you get older you learn restraint," he says. "There's a tendency when you're young to make big isolated statements."

In tune with the surrounding buildings they may be, but Mick's double borders are also the height of sophistication. Plants are arranged mathematically, in a complex tapestry based on repetition. "Each border mirrors the other. But the middle of each border is also a mirror, reciprocated diagonally." The planting is carefully orchestrated throughout the year. In spring, you get pulmonarias and hellebores; it's reasonably neat and tidy. In summer the borders reach a crescendo with sculptural cardoons and towering loosestrife. Yuccas act as visual punctuation marks until they in turn become overwhelmed by grasses. Plants rise and fall in a precise harmony.

As with all artistic souls, Mick is constantly innovating. "At the moment I'm experimenting with trees and shrubs in the new Barn Yard area," he says. "I love plants. It's the way I communicate with the world. First and foremost, I want to be creative." □

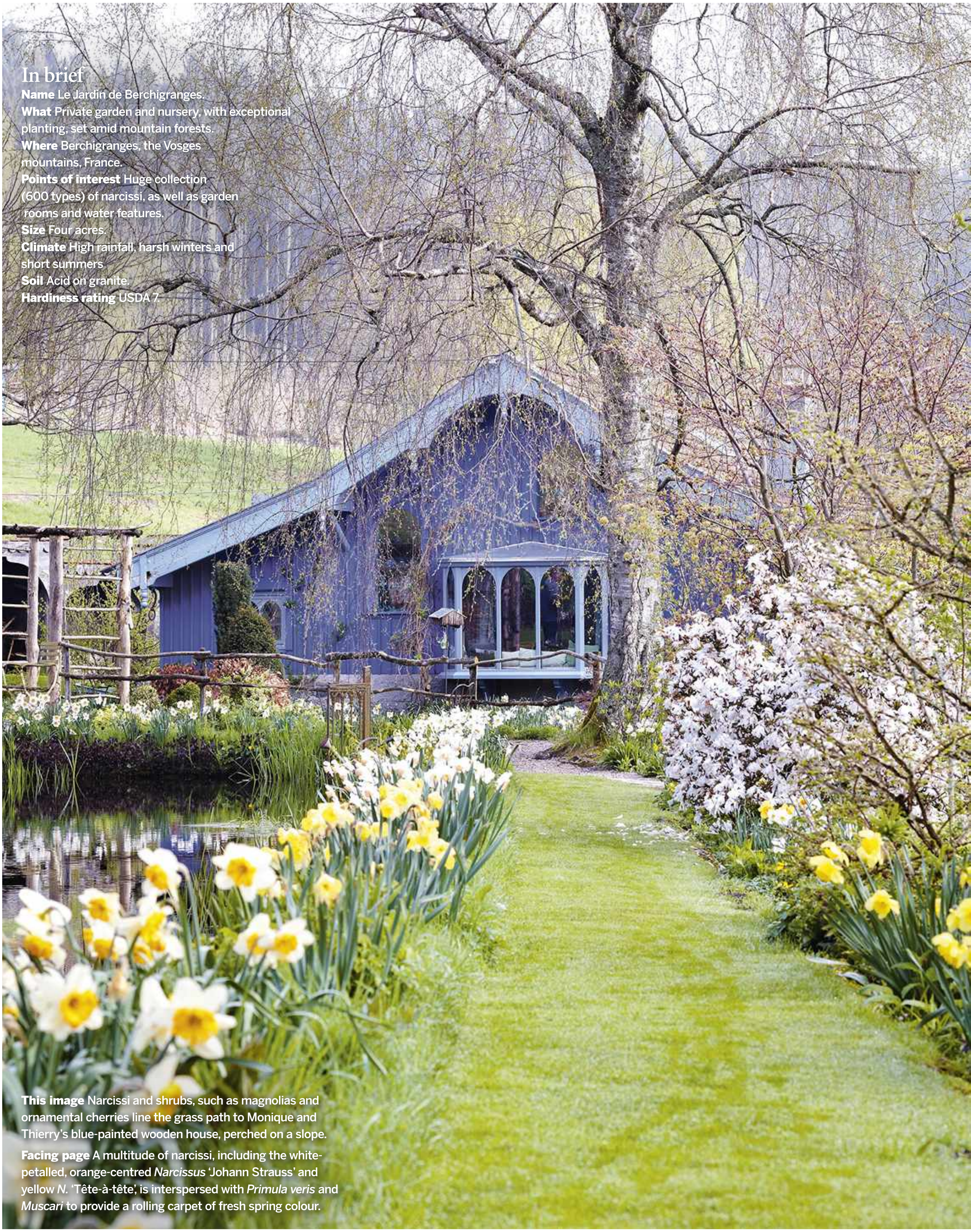
USEFUL INFORMATION

Packwood House, Packwood Lane, Lapworth, Warwickshire B94 6AT.
Tel 01564 782024, nationaltrust.org.uk/packwood-house
On 17 June and 15 July, Mick will be hosting a special 'Gardener's Evening Tour'. Price £15, including a glass of wine and a two-hour tour of the garden with Mick and his team.

NEXT MONTH

Renowned edibles grower Peter Bauwens, from the Netherlands.

I love plants. It's the way I communicate with the world. First and foremost, I want to be creative



In brief

Name Le Jardin de Berchigranges.
What Private garden and nursery, with exceptional planting, set amid mountain forests.
Where Berchigranges, the Vosges mountains, France.
Points of interest Huge collection (600 types) of narcissi, as well as garden rooms and water features.
Size Four acres.
Climate High rainfall, harsh winters and short summers
Soil Acid on granite.
Hardiness rating USDA 7

This image Narcissi and shrubs, such as magnolias and ornamental cherries line the grass path to Monique and Thierry's blue-painted wooden house, perched on a slope.

Facing page A multitude of narcissi, including the white-petalled, orange-centred *Narcissus* 'Johann Strauss' and yellow *N.* 'Tête-à-tête', is interspersed with *Primula veris* and *Muscari* to provide a rolling carpet of fresh spring colour.

Labour of love

Monique and Thierry Dronet quite literally moved mountains to create their beautiful garden. Every spring it is brought to magical life by a vast golden sea of their beloved daffodils

WORDS **MICHAEL BRECKWOLDT** TRANSLATION **NATASHA GOODFELLOW**
PHOTOGRAPHS **SABRINA ROTHE**

> *Over the years Thierry has added many species and cultivars to the local wild types. In total there are around 80,000 narcissus bulbs of 600 cultivar and some species*

A winding road of hairpin bends leads through dark, spruce woods in the Vosges mountains of northeast France. Suddenly, the hills part, to reveal a bright patch of green, shimmering with flecks of creamy white and yellow. In spring, the garden at Berchigranges emerges from the forest like a mirage, with narcissi bursting into bloom and the beech hedges starting to sprout. From the entrance, you can see almost the entire grounds – an area of around four acres, spreading through a small valley that gently rises at the sides.

Twenty years ago Monique and Thierry Dronet started laying out their rambling garden in this former quarry. Narcissi and shrubs, such as magnolias and ornamental cherries, line the grass path to their blue-painted wooden house that's perched on a slope. Next to the house is a small nursery, Un Jardin de Cottage, which offers visitors a well-chosen selection of home-grown plants. At this time of year you'll find a good choice of potted narcissi, including the double white cultivar 'Berchigranges', that originated here in the garden as a sport of *N.* 'Thalia'.

Thierry is infatuated with these heralds of spring. And, thanks to early blooming cultivars, such as *N.* 'February Gold' and *N.* 'Ice Follies', they also light up the tail end of winter. "When I first saw how the wild daffodils, particularly the species daffodil *Narcissus jonquilla*, transformed the meadows here in the mountains into a sea of yellow petals I knew I wanted to have lots and lots of them in our garden," he says.

Over the years he has added many other species and cultivars to the local wild types. In total there are around 80,000 narcissus bulbs of 600 different cultivars and some species, joined every autumn by hundreds of new bulbs of *Camassia*, *Hyacinthoides*, *Allium*, *Scilla* and *Erythronium*. "But I still love the species daffodils the best," says Thierry. The collection also includes more unusual species, such as the pretty *Narcissus rupicola*, which has petals as small as a fingernail. It's one that originates in the Mediterranean and must be overwintered somewhere free from frost.

Narcissus proved a lucky choice. Not only do most cope well with the region's damp climate, proliferating vigorously in the ground, but they are also largely shunned by voles. "Voles are a big problem here but we have proved that we can hold them off with narcissus bulbs," says Monique. "Now even my beloved old roses are protected, because they're surrounded by narcissi."

The garden hasn't always been this golden paradise. When Thierry, a hairdresser by trade, first discovered Berchigranges in 1980 it was an inaccessible old quarry hidden beneath spruce shoots and scree. But once he started to work on the land, he began to feel a deep sense of satisfaction. He felled trees, diverted streams and once he had cleared the land he covered it with countless HGV-loads of topsoil – the only way he could create the beds and rolling hillocks in the barren ground. Thierry also set up a sawmill on the site to process the timber he had felled, later fashioning this into fences, seating and paths.

Fourteen years later, he met Monique, the owner of a nearby nursery. The couple fell in love and decided to relocate Monique's nursery to the former quarry and began to transform it into the blossoming paradise

▷

Monique and Thierry's tips for using daffodils

In designing the garden, we take nature as our example. In spring we take note of where the many wild daffodils appear. We want our plantings to blend in with the landscape; that's why we make room for lots of wild species too.

To avoid daffodils coming up in serried ranks, we tip the bulbs into a wheelbarrow and then spread them carefully with a shovel. In this way, they fall haphazardly on the ground and are planted where they land.

We achieve a long flowering period with our daffodils by planting early cultivars, such as 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation', 'February Silver' and 'Spring Dawn', as well as later ones that include 'Keats' and 'Sinopel'.

Some daffodil species, such as *N. jonquilla*, have a very strong scent. We place these strategically, close to the path or sometimes also in pots so that visitors can appreciate their fragrance.

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1 The fences and wooden walkways are made out of wood from the many trees felled to make room for this spectacular garden.

2 Informal plantings of spring flowers lead down to more formal hedges that delineate one of Monique's garden rooms.

3 The sound of water, whether gently running over pebbles in streams or crashing over cliffs can be heard throughout the garden.

4 This wooden sculpture, made by Thierry, reflects the curves of the garden's hills.

5 Curved hedges, in the form of a labyrinth, echo the slope of the lawn. In the summer this slope is filled with the scent of herbs.

6 Thierry and Monique's pretty wooden house overlooks a small lake. The stone bridge is edged with box.

4

5

6

It was Monique's idea to divide the area into individual 'rooms'. "We used to go several times a year to England and were inspired by what we saw there"

▷ it is today. It was Monique's idea to divide the area into individual 'rooms'. "We used to go several times a year to England and were inspired by what we saw there," she says. "But we never draw any plans of what we want to do. Our ideas tend to come more out of a feeling." In fact, the structure of the garden owes more to the characteristics of its unique site than to any outside influences. Local materials have been combined with alpine species and other wild plants that can cope well with the acid soil and altitude.

Monique and Thierry also feel strongly that the scenes they create should appeal to all the senses, and one of the first things visitors to the garden notice is the sound of water. It gurgles over pebbles, splashes through rapids and then crashes in cascades over cliffs. You're also struck by the scents of plants, by light and shadow play as well as the sound of footsteps on wooden sleepers or gravel. It's a special place, known to many as the 'Blue Garden of the Vosges' – after Monique and Thierry's favourite colour, which dominates the planting from May onwards. But in spring, it is a magical place of white and yellow, and one that's well worth navigating those hairpin bends to find. ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Le Jardin de Berchigranges, 9 route du Tholy, 88 640 Granges sur Vologne, France.

Tel +33 (0)3 29 51 47 19, berchigranges.com

Open The garden is open to visitors from April to October.

1

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12 recommended daffodils

1 *Narcissus* 'Edinburgh'
Bred in the Netherlands in 2007, this cultivar with a pink, split trumpet has a strong scent. 45cm.

2 *N. poeticus*
Thierry particularly loves the delicate scent of this wild species, which has a discreet, red-rimmed trumpet. 45cm. AGM*. USDA 5b-10b†.

3 *N.* 'Double Itzim'
A double variant of the well-known 'Itzim' cultivar. A dainty cyclamineus cultivar with back-folded perianth segments or petals. 20cm.

4 *N.* 'Rip van Winkle'
A tiny double, ideal for pots and balconies. 15cm. USDA 5a-9b.

5 *N.* 'Centannées'
An impressive cultivar, with a split corona. Petals vary from ivory white to a creamy yellow, and an orange trumpet that seems to glow. 45cm. USDA 4a-9b.

6 *N.* 'Jenny'
This dainty cyclamineus cultivar, with a sulphur-yellow trumpet that fades over time, is good for naturalising. 45cm. AGM. USDA 4a-9b.

7 *N.* 'Petit Four'
Elegant double with a creamy-white wreath of petals around an apricot-coloured trumpet. 35cm. USDA 4a-11.

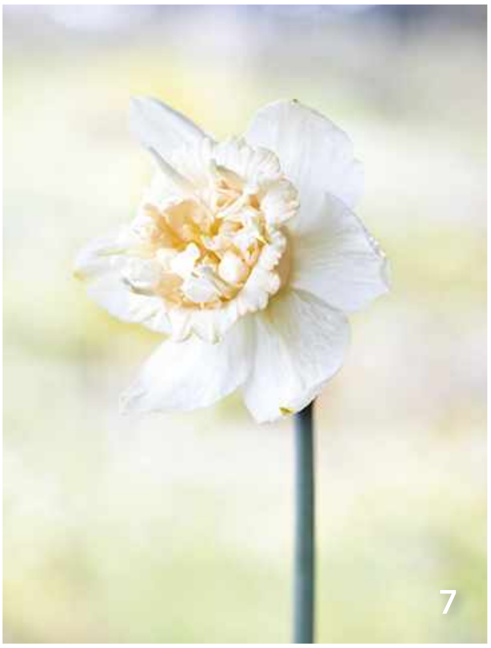
8 *N.* 'New-Baby'
Several sweet-smelling flowers appear on a single stem on this jonquilla daffodil. 20cm. USDA 3a-9b.

9 *N.* 'Stint'
Nodding, lime-yellow flowers with a pleasant scent. Prefers a slightly acid soil and a dry summer. Triandrus. 45cm. AGM. USDA 5a-11.

10 *N.* 'Délibes'
The large, cupped petals are usually yellow, but when they start to fade, they make the orange trumpet stand out all the more. 40cm. USDA 4a-9b.

11 *N.* 'Berchigranges'
Thierry discovered this double, creamy-white daffodil in his own garden. In 2007, he released it as a cultivar – the only French narcissus registered by the RHS. 35cm.

12 *N.* 'Golden Echo'
A jonquilla cultivar bred around ten years ago by Brent and Becky's Bulbs, in Virginia, USA. Very delicate with a conspicuous trumpet. 30cm. USDA 3a-9b.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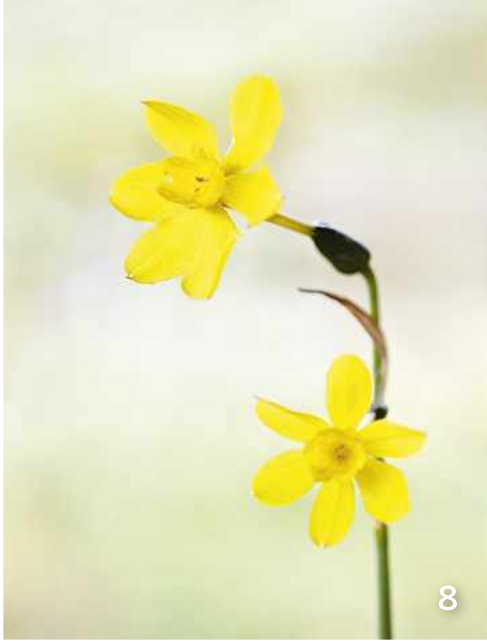
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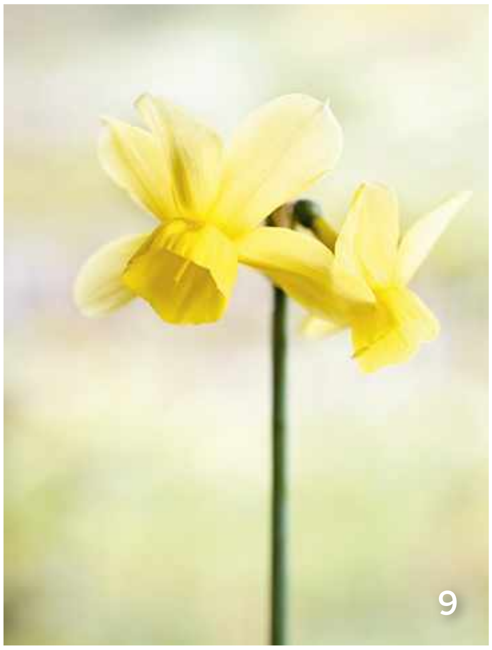
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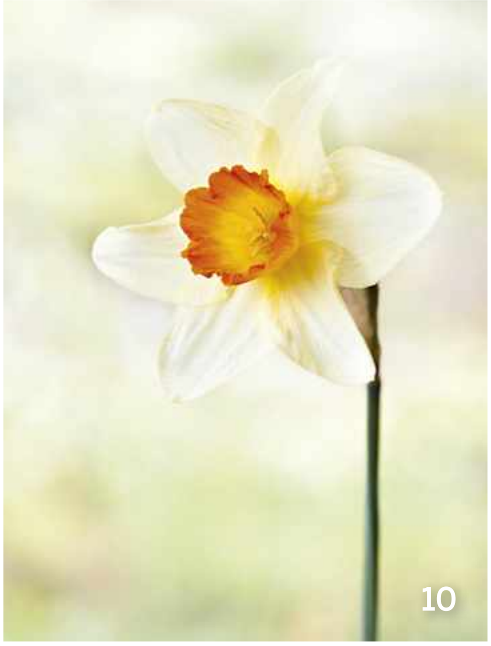
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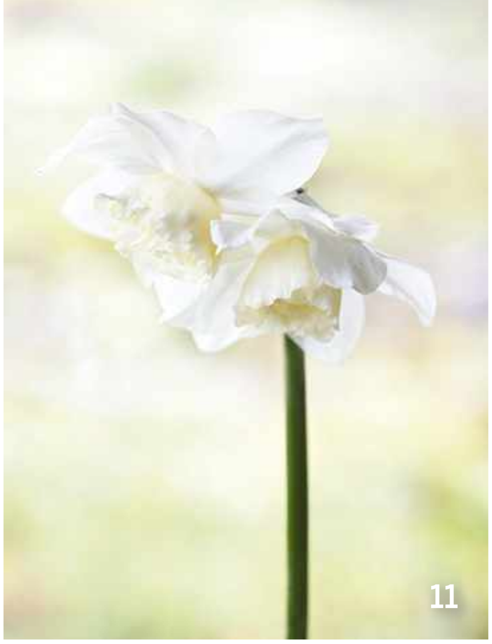
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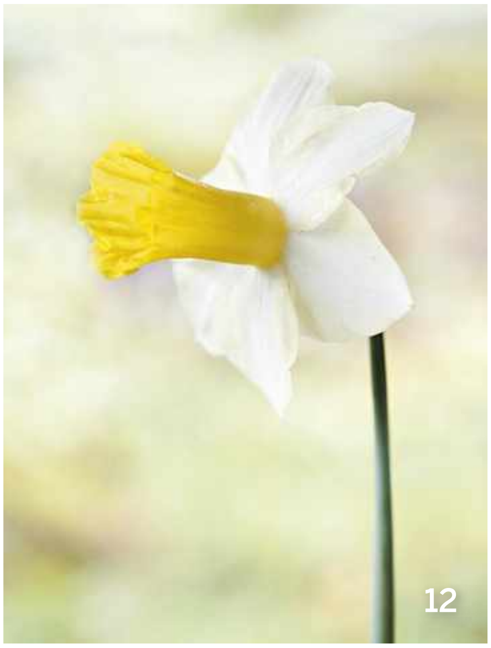
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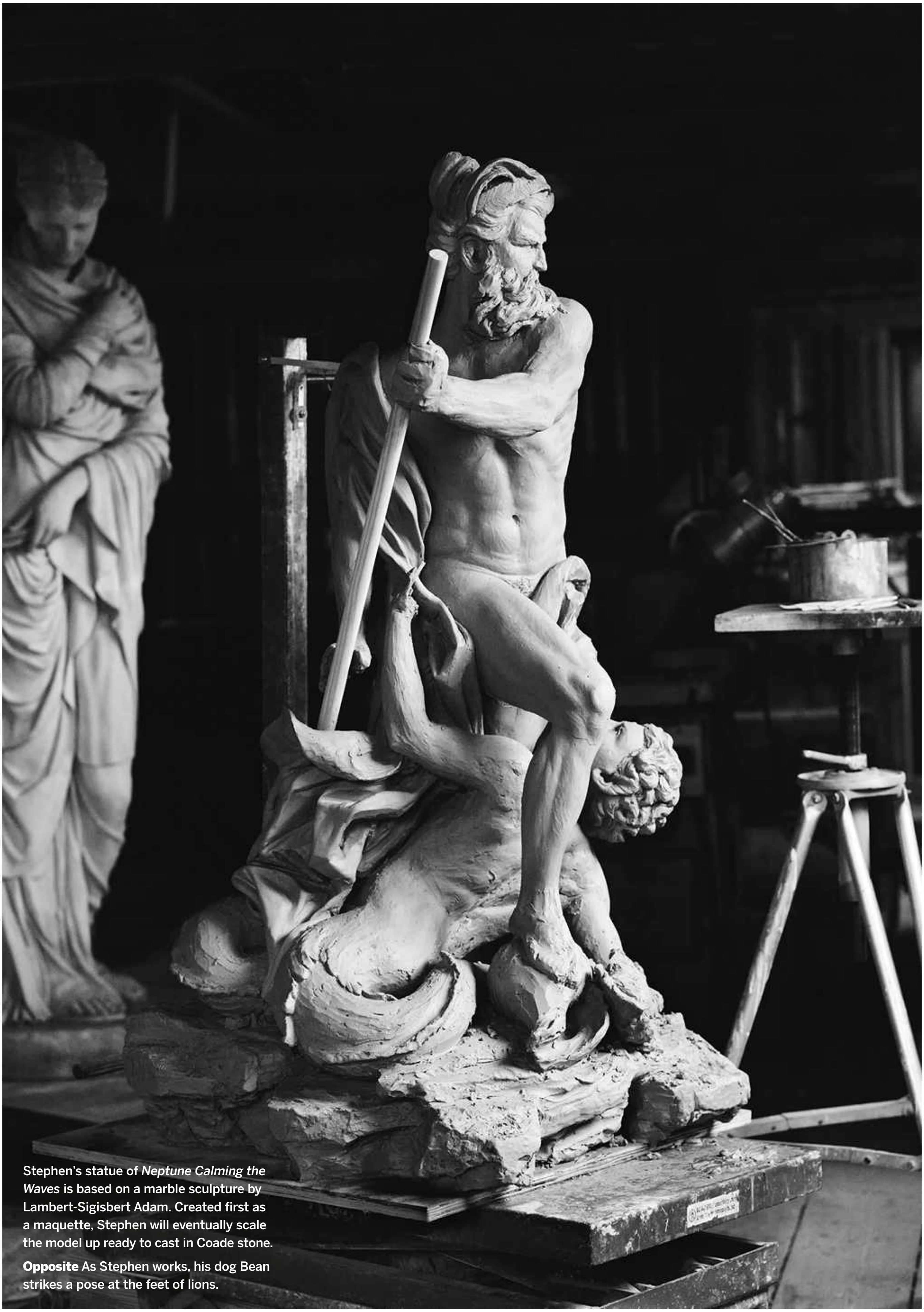
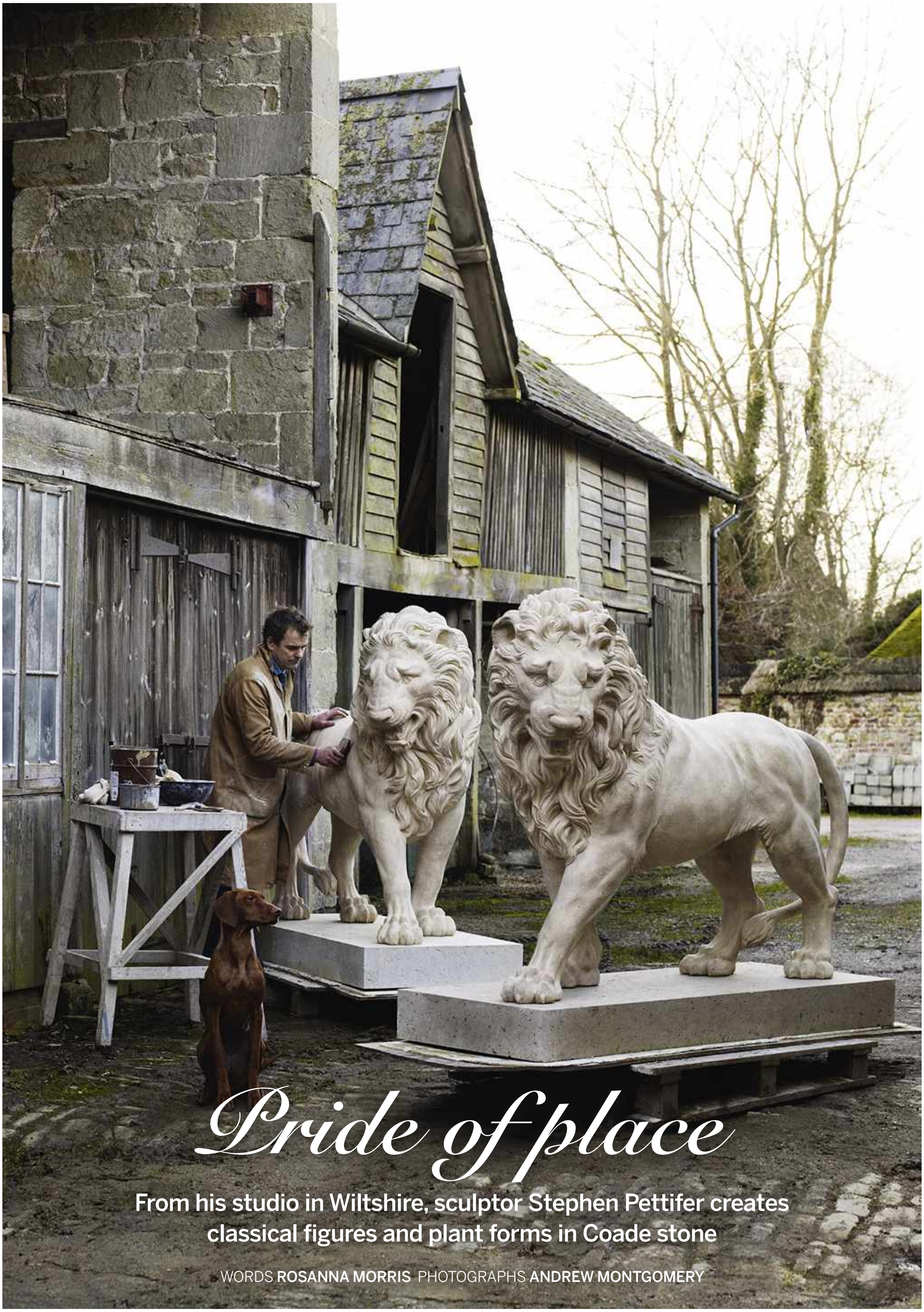
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



Stephen's statue of *Neptune Calming the Waves* is based on a marble sculpture by Lambert-Sigisbert Adam. Created first as a maquette, Stephen will eventually scale the model up ready to cast in Coade stone.

Opposite As Stephen works, his dog Bean strikes a pose at the feet of lions.



Pride of place

From his studio in Wiltshire, sculptor Stephen Pettifer creates classical figures and plant forms in Coade stone

WORDS **ROSANNA MORRIS** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Plaster eagles dangle from the ceiling, lions lie Narnia-style on plinths and super-sized classical legs are propped on tables

In a garden near Pewsey in Wiltshire, there's an ornamental pool surrounded by box hedge and pleached sycamore trees. Rising from the centre of its waters, magnificent unfurling fiddleheads point skywards as water drips off undulating strap-shaped fronds splaying out in all directions. This spectacular hart's tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) is a 3.5m Coade stone fountain made by sculptor Stephen Pettifer, who creates monumental statuary and sculpture for gardens around the country.

"I love plant forms," says Stephen. "I really like ferns and thought I'd work with that idea for the fountain when the client gave me free rein and requested something contemporary."

Having trained in sculpture and stone carving at the City & Guilds of London Art School, Stephen went on to develop a love for English 18th and early 19th-century stoneware, particularly Coade stone invented by Eleanor Coade in the 19th century. Stephen founded his business, Coade Ltd, in 2000.

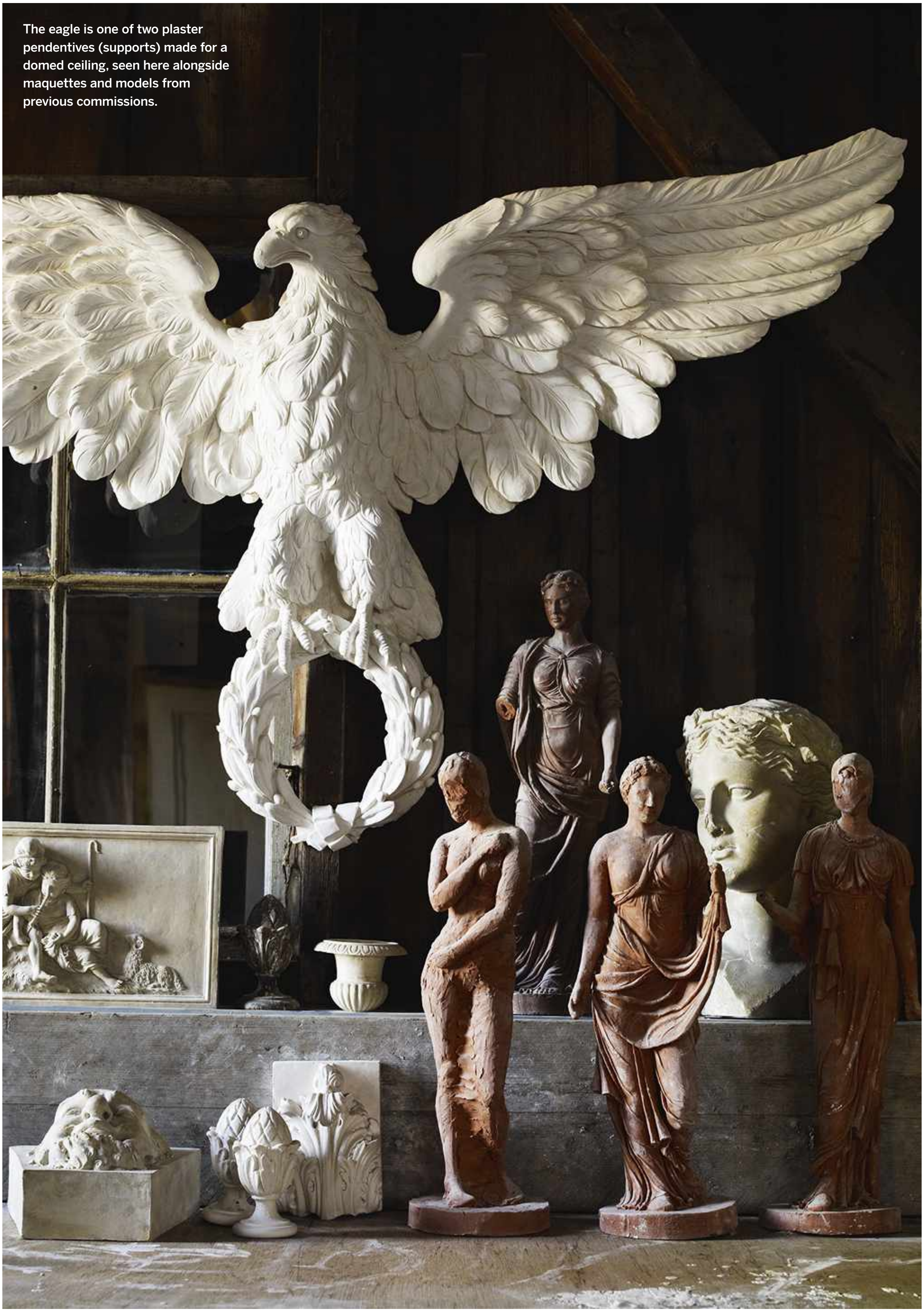
He is currently working on one of the biggest projects of his career – a Coade statue based on the 18th-century marble *Neptune Calming the Waves* by Lambert-Sigisbert Adam. It's for an ornate walled garden within a private estate in Hampshire. The original sculpture resides in the Louvre in Paris and measures less than a metre high. This piece, on the other hand, will be almost three metres. "It is quite complicated but it will look fantastic," says Matthew, the estate's head gardener.

In Stephen's workshop, plaster eagles dangle from the ceiling, lions lie Narnia-style on plinths and super-sized classical legs are propped on tables. There are a lot of whippets too – not to mention a few real-life dogs including Stephen's vizsla, Bean. And in a quiet corner, Stephen has been working on his model of Neptune for months, surrounded by photos of the original taken from every angle imaginable as guidance. His maquette stands one and half metres high – not full scale but a good size for him to work on until he is happy with it. Then he'll scale it up to the final size, make the plaster mould, then cast, assemble and fire it.

Stephen is yet to sculpt Neptune's trident, so his god of the sea advances towards the waves gripping a broom handle. As in the original, a triton (merman) is at Neptune's feet, handing him a piece of coral. Stephen has employed several disciplines to capture his hair and beard blowing in the wind, his fine drapery, ▷

The history of Coade stone

Coade gets its name from Eleanor Coade, who started manufacturing an artificial stone in the late 18th century to make architectural decorations and garden ornaments. A mix of flint, glass, grog (crushed, granulated ceramic) and sand along with clay, the stone is incredibly durable and can withstand freezing temperatures yet is able to hold the finest details. Eleanor's own brand of stone was widely used in many of the greatest gardens of the day. She employed some of the country's finest sculptors to create statues, urns, fountains, animals and figures – one of the best sculptures is the River God at Ham House, London. Stephen grew interested in Coade when, while working for the National Trust, someone showed him a piece and told him that no one knew how to make it any more. He set about hunting down the recipe and perfecting the techniques. "I found the same clay they used in the 18th century. Records at a quarry in Devon documented supplying ball clay to Eleanor Coade's factory. They still mine the same seam." As well as recreating classical sculpture, he uses the material in much broader and more contemporary ways.



The eagle is one of two plaster pendentives (supports) made for a domed ceiling, seen here alongside maquettes and models from previous commissions.

Creases and seams need to be smoothed out and finer details – the ringlets in a lion's mane, for example – added while the piece is still wet

▷ the detailed anatomy (he had a life model sit for him in the workshop) and the intricate rockwork.

"I spend a lot of time working on the composition to get it right," says Stephen, picking up Neptune's frowning head and lifting it on to the armature, cocking his own head to see how it looks.

When the sculpture is cast in the pale, buff cream-coloured Coade stone, it will be craned on to a plinth within a grotto in the garden. For the time being, there's a piece of plywood board in the shape of the statue in its place to show what it will look like when in situ.

Stephen has visited the garden ten times to see how the statue will work and has spent hours talking to Matthew. "It's important to discuss how the sculpture relates to the building, the flower beds, the trees and the landscape," says Stephen.

The wet Coade clay, which is specially mixed in Stoke-on-Trent, is pressed into the mould so the statue ends up hollow. It is then left for several days before it is demoulded and hand finished by Stephen or a member of his team. They remove the plaster mould one section at a time, which leaves slight creases and seams in the Coade. These need to be smoothed out and finer details – the ringlets in a lion's mane, for example, or the muscles of Neptune's rippled torso – added while the piece is still wet.

The drying process has to be gradual and slow so the statues are dried in a polythene case before going into the giant kiln. A life-sized lion will spend at least five to six weeks out of the mould before it is fired.

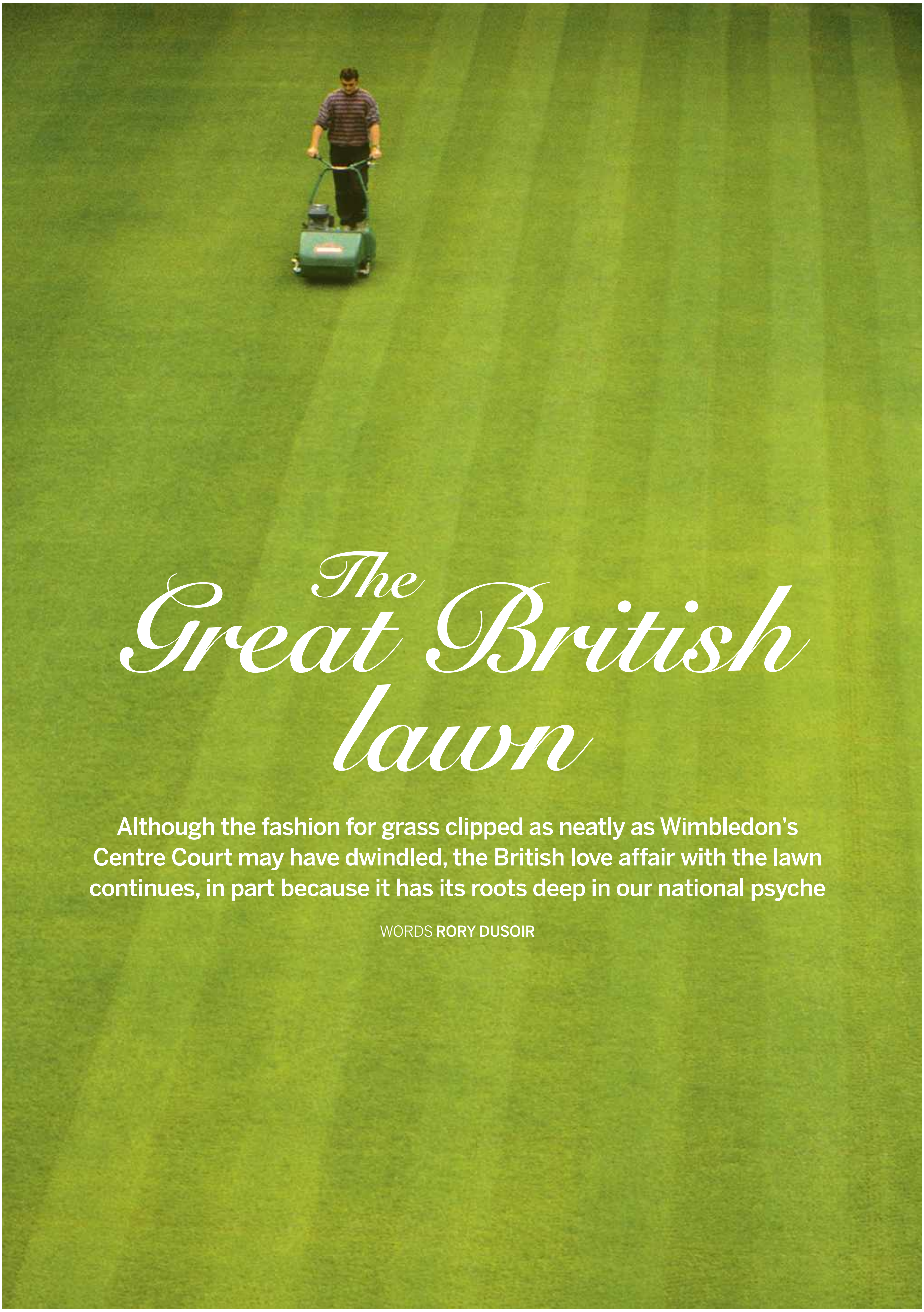
Stephen also works in other materials such as bronze, lead and plaster, although his speciality is Coade. And it isn't only new works he makes; he also undertakes lots of restoration work. "Hundreds of original pieces of Coade have been through this workshop," says Stephen. "We've recently finished repairing a bracket that was in danger of falling off Buckingham Palace." But it's the commissions that are testament to his talents. "People ask us if we can make something and we can," says Stephen. "Anything." □

For details of Stephen's work visit coade.co.uk

Garden security

Garden statues and ornaments can sometimes be vulnerable to theft. While it's likely to be the smaller, more portable objects that are at highest risk, large and heavy statues and sculptures can also be stolen using lifting equipment and vehicles. Gates, lighting, hedges and fences can keep your garden secure but also consider the following:

- **Screen expensive items** from roadside view.
- **Secure vulnerable statuary** in place by inserting stainless steel dowels into the object and fixing it to a plinth.
- **Land anchors** can be used to secure ornaments. These are hammered into the ground and the object is secured to it by chain and padlock.
- **Expensive and heavy works** of art can be fitted with movement sensors, which set off an alarm when the object is moved.
- **Electronic tagging systems** are available that are embedded into the item, enabling identification of recovered stolen property.
- **Do not publicise** the fact you have a valuable sculpture in your garden – or its location.
- **Place the item in the centre of a pond** to make it more difficult to steal.



The Great British lawn

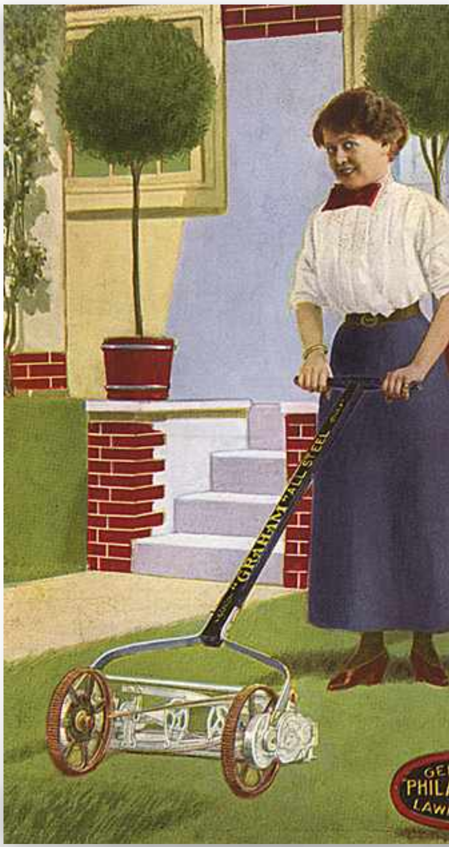
Although the fashion for grass clipped as neatly as Wimbledon's Centre Court may have dwindled, the British love affair with the lawn continues, in part because it has its roots deep in our national psyche

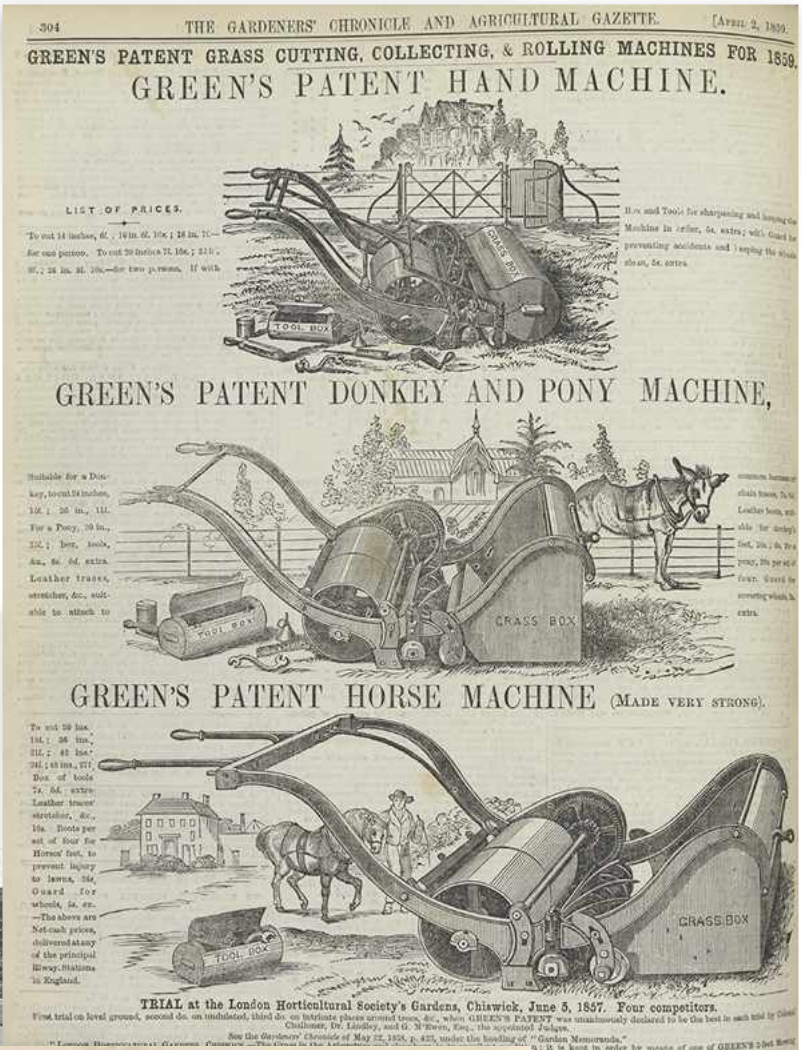
WORDS **RORY DUSOIR**

THIS PAGE: IMAGES / ALAMY. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COUNTRY LIFE PICTURE LIBRARY; RHS IMAGES;
COURTESY THE ADVERTISING ARCHIVES; COUNTRY LIFE PICTURE LIBRARY; MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Below 'So light, the lady of the house can use it!' This advert for the Philadelphia Lawn Mower Company from around 1910, shows ease of use as all important in the early days of mowers.

Left Gardeners tend to the lawn in the garden at Hall Barn, Buckinghamshire, in 1898. Brushing removes dew and wormcasts. These men have their work cut out.





304 THE GARDENERS' CHRONICLE AND AGRICULTURAL GAZETTE. [April 2, 1859.

GREEN'S PATENT GRASS CUTTING, COLLECTING, & ROLLING MACHINES FOR 1859.

GREEN'S PATENT HAND MACHINE.

LIST OF PRICES.

GREEN'S PATENT DONKEY AND PONY MACHINE,

GREEN'S PATENT HORSE MACHINE (Made very strong).

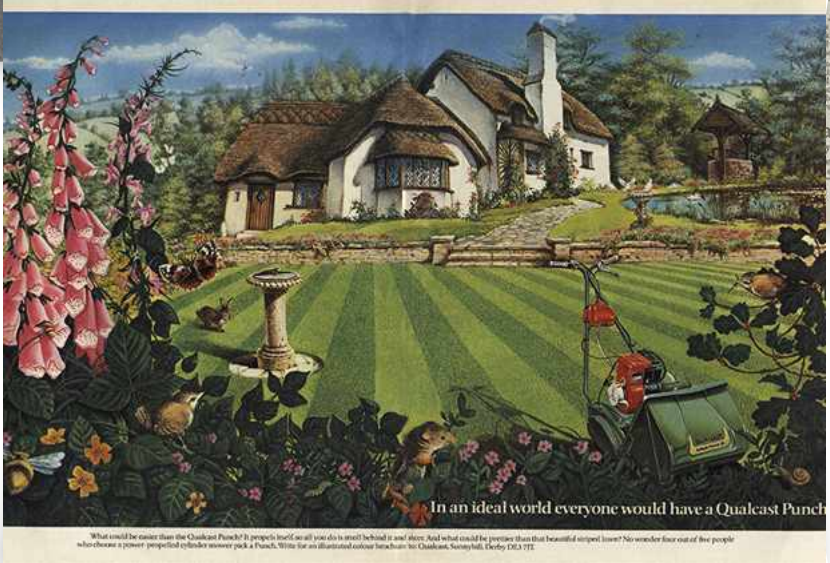
TRIAL at the London Horticultural Society's Gardens, Chiswick, June 5, 1857. Four competitors.

Street, bottom of Holborn, London,

TOOL BOX
GRASS BOX
TOOL BOX
GRASS BOX
TOOL BOX
GRASS BOX

Above Groundsmen cutting the grass at Spains Hall, Essex, in 1902. Donkeys or ponies used to pull lawn mowers on fine turf wore specially made leather overshoes called horseboots to protect the grass.

Right This 1960s advert for a Qualcast lawn mower presents the lawn as the centrepiece of an English rural idyll.


In an ideal world everyone would have a Qualcast Punch

What could be easier than the Qualcast Punch? It propels itself so all you do is stroll behind it and steer. And what could be prettier than that beautiful striped lawn? No wonder four out of five people who choose a power-propelled cylinder mower pick a Punch. Write for an illustrated colour brochure to: Qualcast, Sunnyhill, Derby DE3 7JT.

Above *The Gardeners' Chronicle* magazine from March 1859 carries an advert for Thomas Green & Son's patent grass cutting machines. Manufacturers were already seeking to differentiate their products – although mass appeal was still some way off.

The earliest lawns were very much the preserve of the elite and they've held a powerful aspirational appeal ever since

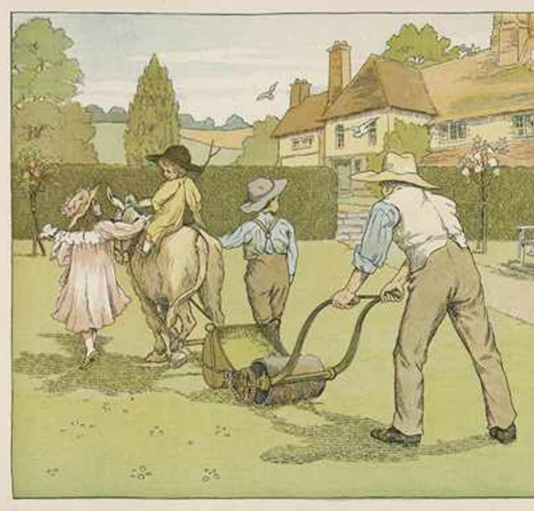
It is arguable that, for all our other achievements in the sphere of gardening, the most important and iconic contribution of British horticulture to the world is the lawn. Lawns possess obvious appeal as an element in landscape design. Of all soft landscaping features, they are by far the most tolerant of wear. This means they can bridge the huge chasm in practicality between the severe utility of hard landscaping and the majority of soft landscaping that is designed to be looked at, rather than as a space to be inhabited. Lawns provide a strong visual link to the pastoral English landscape, which may be visible beyond our boundary, but if not will certainly hold a deeply entrenched position within our mind's eye. They are pleasant to look at and to lounge on and provide an excellent setting for other landscape features.

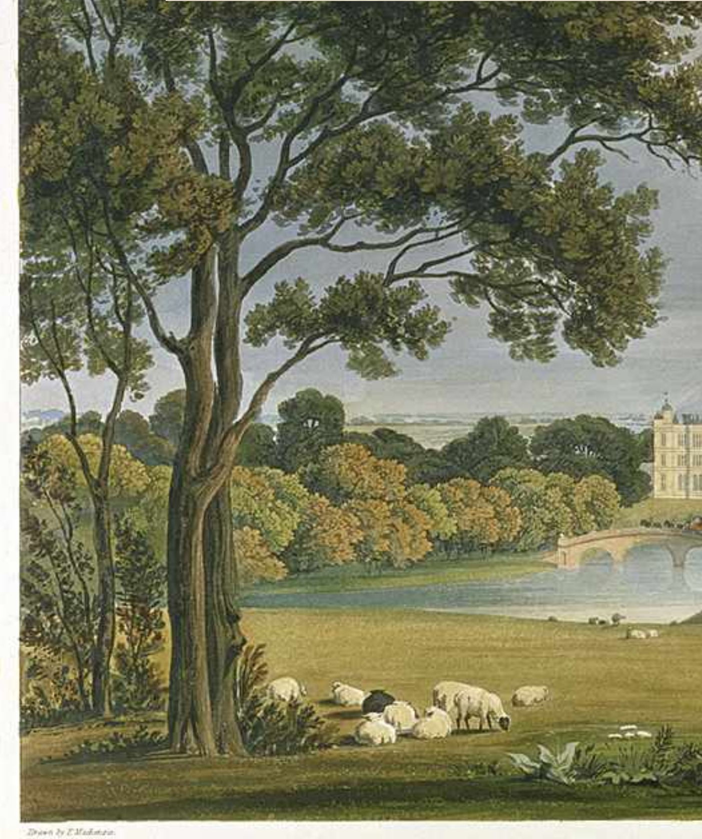
Lawn care in itself has achieved cult status as an activity. The act of pushing a mower around possesses an almost primordial appeal. Our interaction with and manipulation of 'nature' is a defining characteristic of humanity. Nature's response is invariably to mount a sustained attempt towards unruliness and reversion. Mowing the lawn is an immediate paradigm of our relationship with nature and it is to be expected that as a recently industrialised society we should cling to such activities as a vestige of our agricultural past. Lawn maintenance is an accessible activity, as it does not require specialised plant knowledge. In practical terms it occupies a gap between 'gardening' proper and the built environment – a world of straight lines, sharp edges, levels, of hard and fast rules. But a forgiving and soft world nonetheless.

Eighteenth-century origins

Lawns were established as an indispensable element of garden design during the 18th century. Eighteenth-century landscape designers stylised English pastoral scenery – by far the most prominent surface treatment in their idiom was cropped grass. Beyond the ha-ha, sheep cattle or deer may have maintained the sward. But next to the house, it was required that men with scythes regularly trim the herbage, an extremely labour intensive and skilled task. The aesthetic demanded as smooth a surface as possible. When you consider that grass was predominantly a resource for feeding livestock, the notion of constantly employing men to remove it can be considered an outrageous act of ostentation. The modern history of the lawn can be said to really get going once lawn-mowing technology was developed and adopted during the 19th century. But it is important to remember that the earliest lawns were very much the preserve of the elite. Lawns have held a powerful aspirational appeal ever since.

The cylinder mower was invented in Gloucestershire in the 1830s, almost as a by-product of the industrial revolution in cloth-making. The ▷





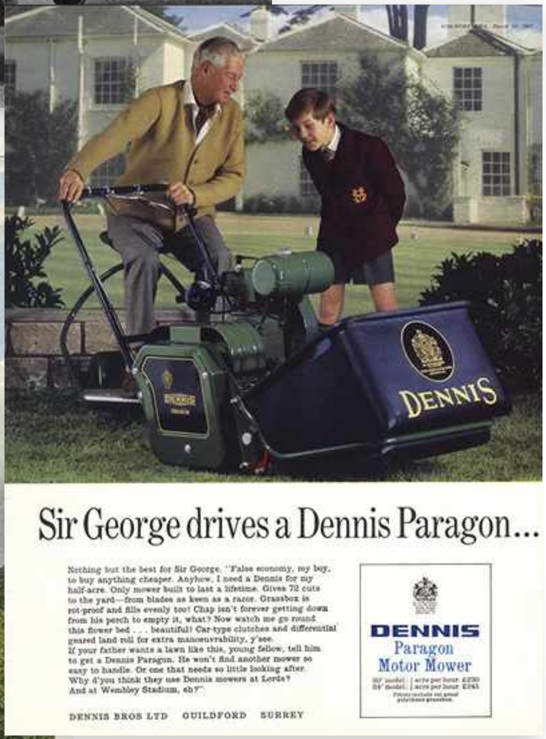
Above Cropped grass, such as that here at Burghley House in Lincolnshire, defines the English pastoral landscape. The creation of idealised English landscapes in the 18th century initiated the worldwide lawn fetish.

Right Not content with mere stripes, lawnsman Peter Lawrence cuts the lawn in the quad of Lincoln College, Oxford, into a chequered pattern by cutting from top to bottom and then side to side (1998).

Far left By the end of the 19th century, lawn mowers had become thoroughly infiltrated into the fabric of British life.

Left Highly skilled and time-consuming, scything lawns had been the only alternative to grazing before the mower was invented.

Engraved by R. Havell & Son.



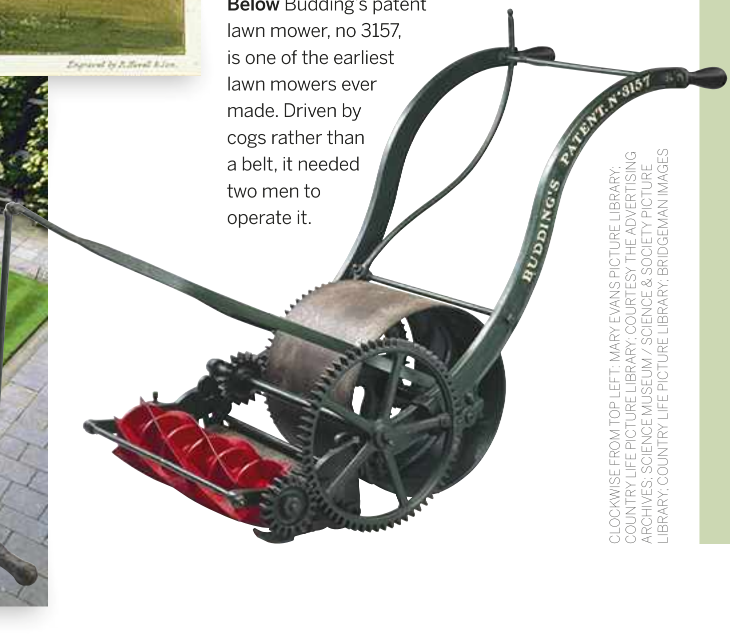
Sir George drives a Dennis Paragon...

Nothing but the best for Sir George. "False economy, my boy, to buy anything cheaper. Anyhow, I need a Dennis for my half-acre. Only mower built to last a lifetime. Gives 72 cuts to the yard—from blades as keen as a razor. Grassbox is rot-proof and fills evenly too! Chap isn't forever getting down from his perch to empty it, what? Now watch me go round this flower bed . . . beautiful! Car-type clutches and differential geared land roll for extra manoeuvrability, y'see.
If your father wants a lawn like this, young fellow, tell him to get a Dennis Paragon. He won't find another mower so easy to handle. Or one that needs so little looking after. Why d'you think they use Dennis mowers at Lords?
And at Wembley Stadium, eh?"

DENNIS BROS LTD GUILDFORD SURREY

DENNIS
Paragon
Motor Mower

Above Even in the Swinging Sixties, lawn mowers still managed to embody the status inherent in owning land, as shown in this 1967 advert for a Dennis Paragon Motor Mower.



Below Budding's patent lawn mower, no 3157, is one of the earliest lawn mowers ever made. Driven by cogs rather than a belt, it needed two men to operate it.

Timeline

Key dates in history

1700s
Landscape designers, including William Kent, Charles Bridgeman and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, begin what becomes known as the English Landscape Garden movement. Their designs for gardens, such as Stowe, Rousham and Chatsworth, feature vast sweeping lawns.

1830
Edwin Budding, an engineer from Thrupp in Gloucestershire, patents the first lawn mower, bringing the perfectly cropped lawn within reach of the middle classes.

1893
James Sumner of Leyland, Lancashire, designs the world's first steam-powered lawn mower. He later produces a modified version of his design through his newly founded Lancashire Steam Motor Company, which eventually morphs into British Leyland.

1902
The Suffolk-based firm Ransomes introduces the first petrol-driven lawn mower.

1945
Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, better known as DDT, goes on general sale in the USA as a lawn pesticide. At the time it was considered efficient and benign compared to many of the poisons that had previously been in use.

1962
American biologist Rachel Carson publishes *Silent Spring*, which examines the environmental impact of DDT, linking this and other pesticides to cancer.

1963
Flymo introduces its labour-saving hover mower, which floats on a cushion of air. It signals a decline in the appetite for maintaining the highest standards of lawn care.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY; COUNTRY LIFE PICTURE LIBRARY; COURTESY THE ADVERTISING ARCHIVES; SCIENCE MUSEUM / SCIENCE & SOCIETY PICTURE LIBRARY; COUNTRY LIFE PICTURE LIBRARY; BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Lawns still have a powerful global currency as a symbol of prosperity and it is almost impossible to envisage a world without them

▷ technology was essentially sound, though initially somewhat cumbersome to use, and it was adopted fully with some modifications over the course of a few decades. This gradually democratised the ownership of lawns in concert with the development of suburbia. Would this lessen the allure? The new technology begat refinement, and as long as further refinement was possible, lawn maintenance remained an aspirational activity even for those who had to perform the labour themselves. Lawn mowing machines and accoutrements became status symbols in themselves.

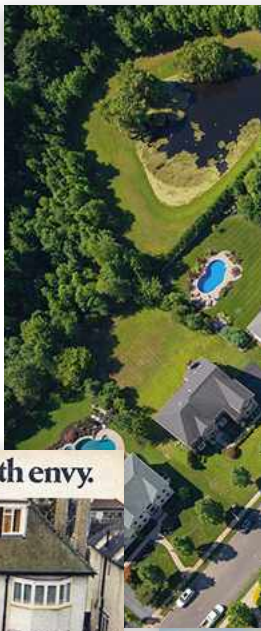
The globalisation of lawns

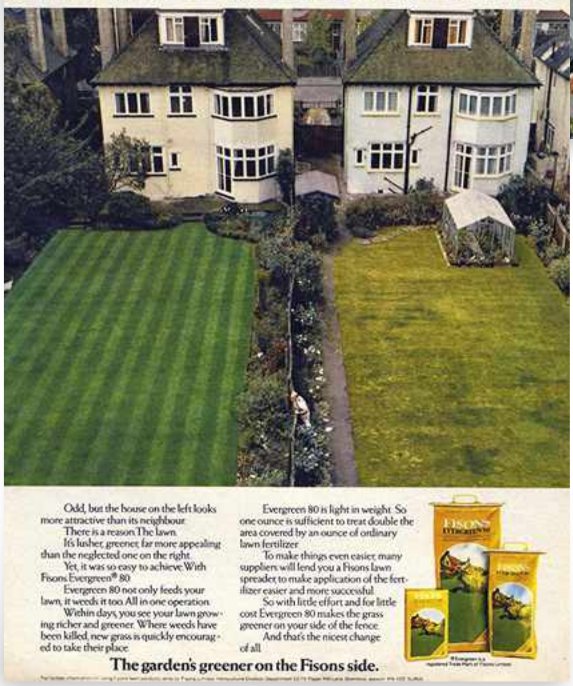
The lawn fetish flourished with the British Empire and was transferred to the wider world in combination with a number of the turf-based sports, such as cricket and football, for which Britain is famous. It was adopted and transmuted nowhere more avidly than in the USA. Rather like the English language, we can attribute much of the current global hegemony of lawns to our American cousins. There is no doubt that the 18th-century ideal of a landscape garden is imprinted firmly on the American psyche. Urban parks, golf courses and suburban developments were consciously based on this ideal. To a nation that had to struggle to define itself and impose its own order on a hostile continent, the cultivation of lawns became an important symbol of nationhood and civic pride as well as personal aspiration. The climate in much of the USA is poorly adapted to lawn culture – nevertheless an increasingly uncompromising lawn aesthetic was vigorously pursued throughout the 20th century. The establishment and maintenance of lawns was conceived and enacted as a war against nature. Extraordinary excesses in the consumption of chemicals and water use were encouraged in pursuit of the ideal.

Conspicuous consumption or destruction of natural resources is thankfully no longer as fashionable in the West as it was. At one time the lawn was a totem both of the British Empire and the American Dream. Neither now viewed with unalloyed positivity. In films such as *Blue Velvet* and *American Beauty*, a well-tended, suburban American lawn represents sterile, oppressive conformity. Nevertheless, lawns still have a powerful global currency as a symbol of prosperity and it is almost impossible to envisage a world without them. Lawns carry a huge weight of cultural and environmental baggage, but where does the future lie? At Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, seat of the Duke of Devonshire, there are twin lawns known as 'the Salisburys', which run up to the east side of the house. They were established by sowing hay seed in the 18th century and have not been 'improved' since – as a result they contain an astonishing multiplicity of species. The Duke and Duchess declined the invitation to rectify them in the 1980s, following intervention from a Dr Gilbert of Sheffield University. Such lawns were smooth enough to satisfy 'Capability' Brown – perhaps we should be equally accepting of nature's foibles, in spite of our hard-won power to impose a stricter will? □

Right Neatly trimmed lawns have become as much a symbol of American suburbia as the white picket fence.

Below In suburban Britain too, a smart lawn became seen as a signifier of middle-class success. Advertisers here and in the USA preyed on our insecurity.





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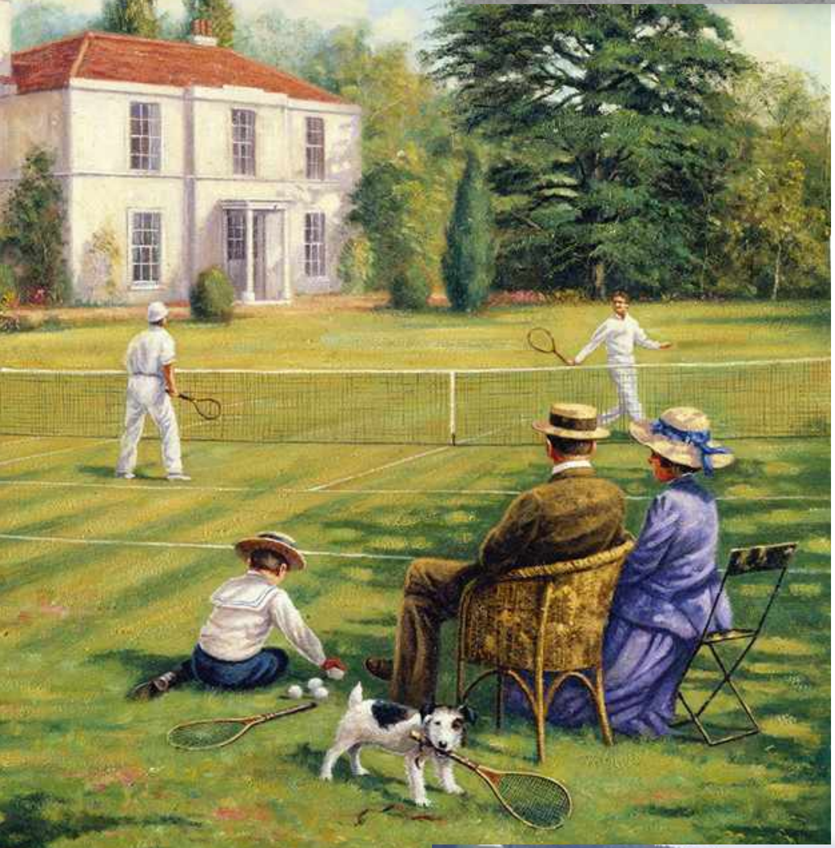
Above Croquet became extremely popular in England in the 1860s, although it was soon eclipsed by tennis as the most popular pastime for home lawns and clubs. The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club at Wimbledon still has a croquet lawn.



Left It is hard to envisage the Victorian and Edwardian eras without lawns, for lolling and for sport. Our notion of quintessential Englishness has been formed with a lawn as the constant backdrop.

Left The Lloyd family subverted the lawn aesthetic from an early stage at Great Dixter. Some visitors assumed the family had fallen on hard times.

Right One of the Salisbury lawns at Chatsworth House. Planted in the 18th century, they contain a multiplicity of broad-leaved species.

Further Information

BOOKS

The Grass is Greener
by Tom Fort
(Harper Collins, 2000).
An engaging historical account of the British Lawn, mingled with personal musings on the nature of manhood.

The Lawn – A History of an American Obsession
by Virginia Scott Jenkins
(Smithsonian Books, Washington, 1994).
A rigorous examination of the lawn in the USA. Scott Jenkins tracks the social and commercial forces that drove our American cousins to extraordinary excess in pursuit of a largely unobtainable ideal.

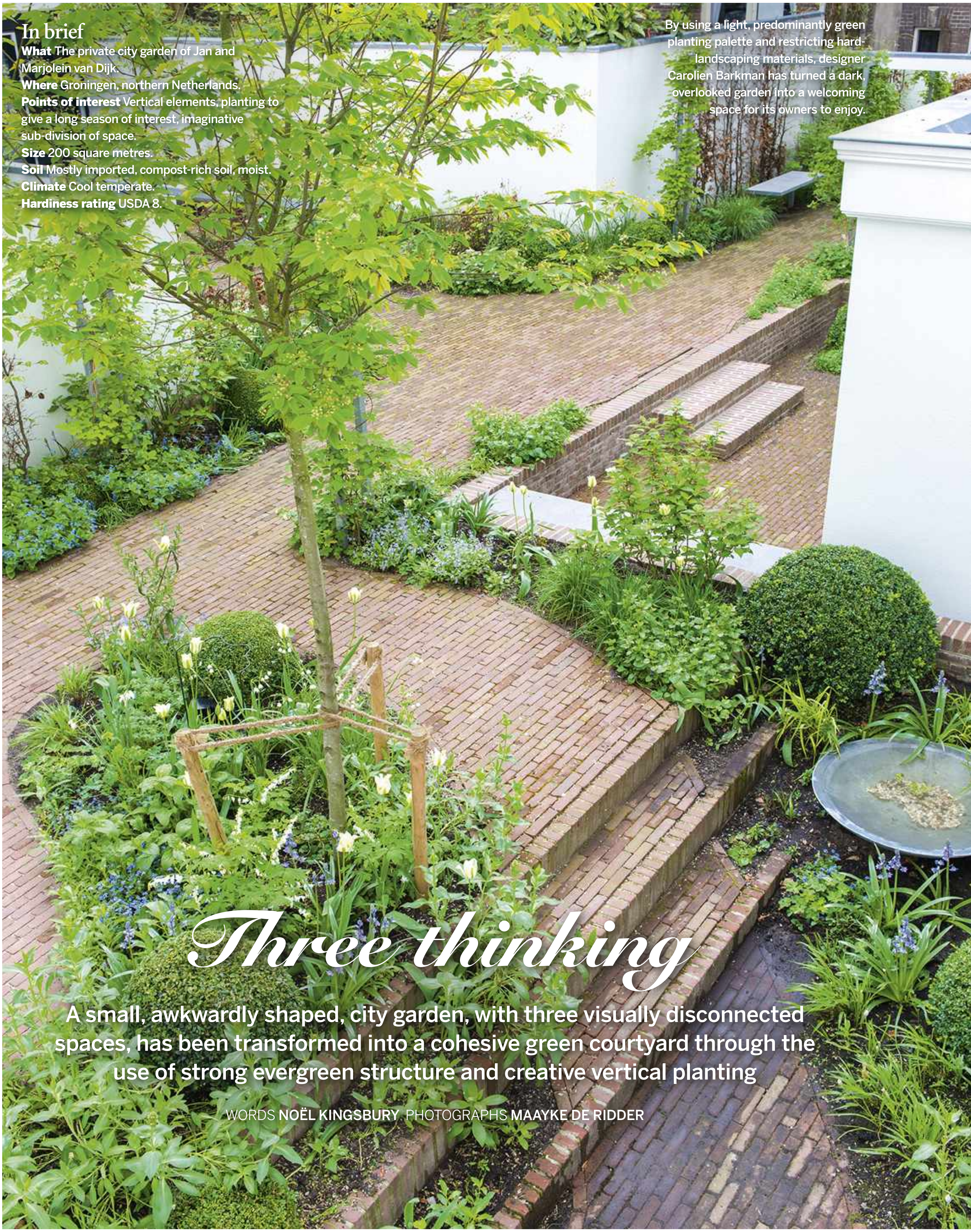
The Lawn Expert
by Dr DG Hessayon
(Expert Publications, 1993).
An unreconstructed take on perfect lawns and how to achieve them.

Silent Spring
by Rachel Carson
(Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
This influential book, a seminal text of environmentalism, still casts a shadow over the lawn industry to this day.

Meadows
by Christopher Lloyd
(Cassel, 2004).
A long time before the environmental movement, the Lloyd family established ornamental flower meadows at Great Dixter. Here Christopher Lloyd shares his wisdom.

Reader competition

For the chance to win one of two Harrier 48 lawn mowers from Hayter, worth £899, turn to page 101.



Three thinking

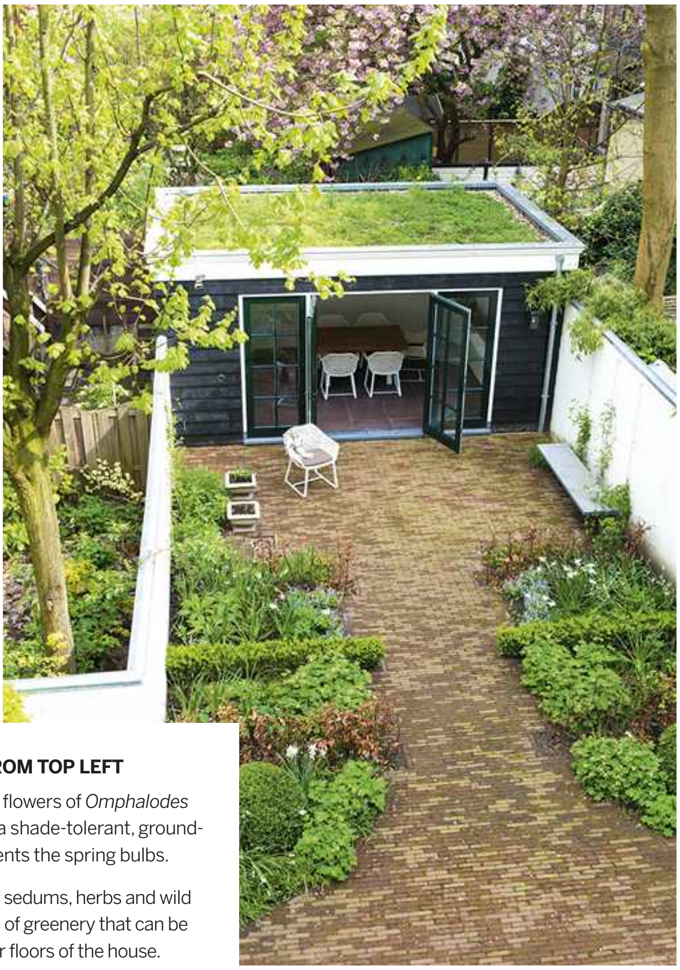
A small, awkwardly shaped, city garden, with three visually disconnected spaces, has been transformed into a cohesive green courtyard through the use of strong evergreen structure and creative vertical planting

WORDS **NOËL KINGSBURY**, PHOTOGRAPHS **MAAYKE DE RIDDER**

In brief

What The private city garden of Jan and Marjolein van Dijk.
Where Groningen, northern Netherlands.
Points of interest Vertical elements, planting to give a long season of interest, imaginative sub-division of space.
Size 200 square metres.
Soil Mostly imported, compost-rich soil, moist.
Climate Cool temperate.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

By using a light, predominantly green planting palette and restricting hard-landscaping materials, designer Carolien Barkman has turned a dark, overlooked garden into a welcoming space for its owners to enjoy.



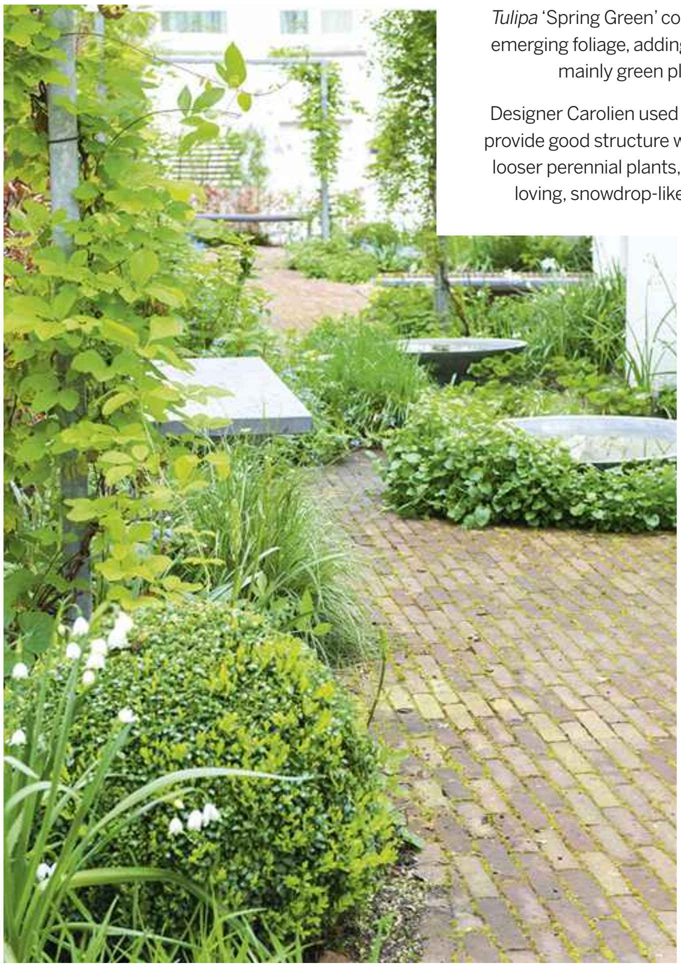
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

In March, the pretty, blue flowers of *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Starry Eyes', a shade-tolerant, groundcover plant, complements the spring bulbs.

The garden room's roof of sedums, herbs and wild flowers, adds to the areas of greenery that can be viewed from the upper floors of the house.

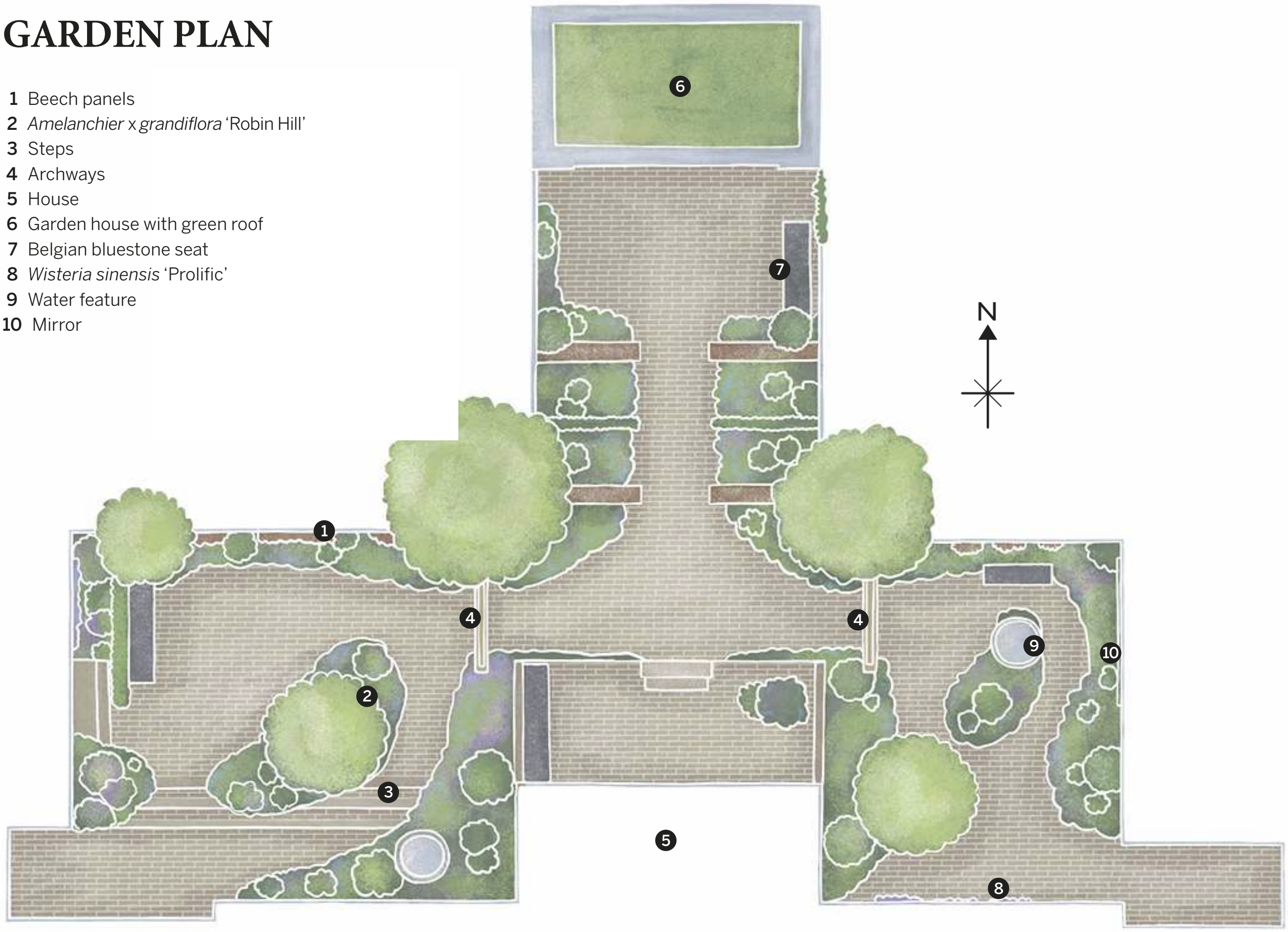
Tulipa 'Spring Green' complements the mass of emerging foliage, adding a fresh highlight to the mainly green planting scheme.

Designer Carolien used clipped box sparingly to provide good structure without overpowering the looser perennial plants, including the moisture-loving, snowdrop-like *Leucojum aestivum*.



GARDEN PLAN

1 Beech panels
2 *Amelanchier* x *grandiflora* 'Robin Hill'
3 Steps
4 Archways
5 House
6 Garden house with green roof
7 Belgian bluestone seat
8 *Wisteria sinensis* 'Prolific'
9 Water feature
10 Mirror



HANNAH McVICAR

Creating a city garden is never easy, especially when much of it is shaded by surrounding buildings. But that was the challenge for Dutch designer Carolien Barkman when she was asked to transform an overlooked space into a traditional courtyard garden where owners Jan and Marjolein van Dijk could relax, work and entertain. "It was a very dark place," says Carolien. "Not very inviting."

It was also oddly shaped so it felt like three separate gardens, meaning Carolien's first task was to create a space that looked like a single garden, albeit one with three different parts. To do this she replaced fences with walls, painted the same white as the house, and used the same traditional brick pavers to create a sense of unity. She also identified two axes along which to concentrate her planting areas. "There was already a little garden house," she says, "so I centred one axis on that and the other at right angles to draw the areas together."

Steps, in the same brick as the pathways, provide a breathing space between the different areas, and these are also separated by archways covered with climbers that give the garden a greener feel. "When there is not much space for plants I like to go vertical," she says.

As well as the archways Carolien used broad, panel-like pillars of beech to break up the white walls; even in winter their dead leaves lend a striking architectural feel. Complex ground-layer planting is also a favourite technique of Carolien's. "I used box to give structure, and then loose plants elsewhere," she says. She's also made some bold choices for the planting, using species not normally associated with a small urban space, such as *Astilboides tabularis* – "I love the light coming through the large, rounded leaves," she says – and *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent', a grass with a "transparent, airy feel". She also uses ferns and self-seeding plants, such as *Aquilegia, Centranthus* and *Lunaria annua*, to give a more natural look. "I like it to be a little bit messy," she says; "to look like a real garden with lots of plants."

There is colour here, indeed, a blue and white colour scheme was specified by Jan and Marjolein, but the main impression is green. Plenty of foliage ensures a long season, but with an emphasis on the delicate and ethereal, rather than the somewhat solid greens often used in city gardens. Nor are there many shrubs, which Carolien feels are "too heavy". By keeping her planting light and not shying away from plants more normally seen in a country garden, Carolien has created a restful and inviting courtyard space for Jan and Marjolein to enjoy. □

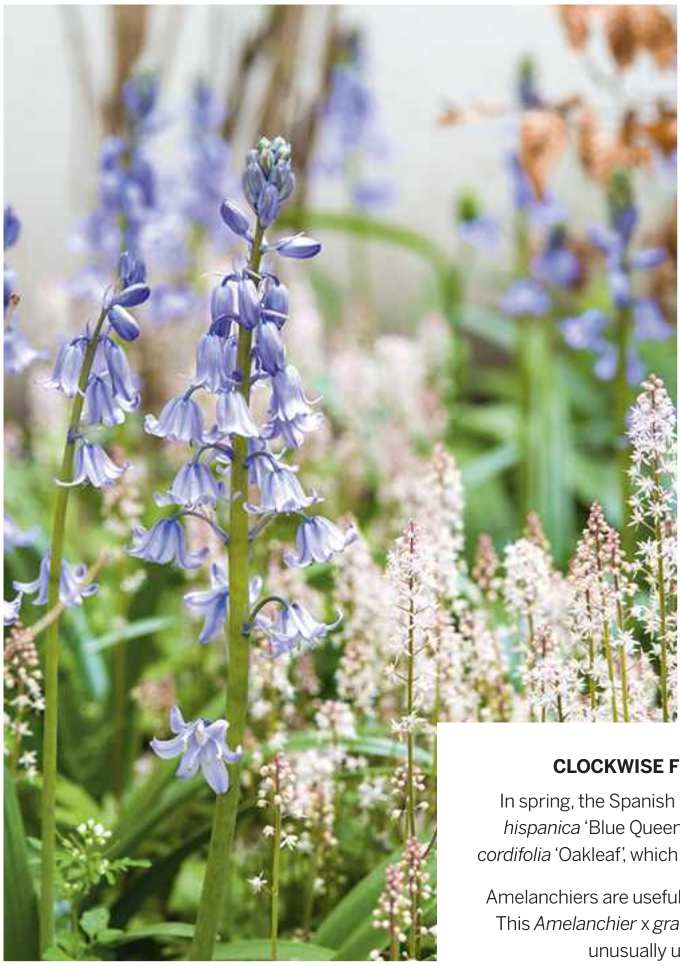
USEFUL INFORMATION

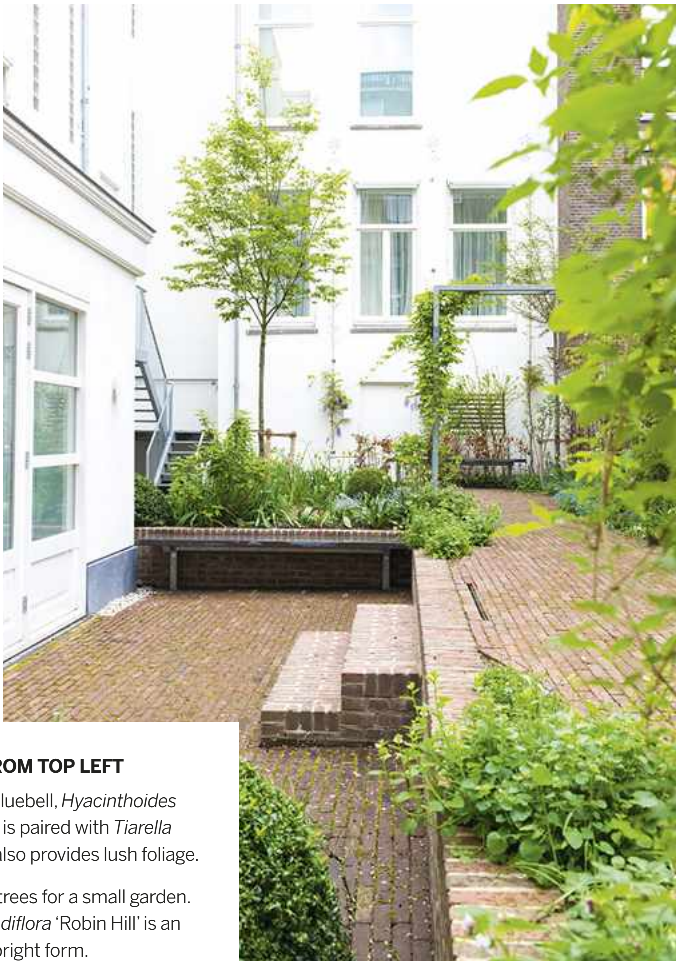
Address Carolien Barkman, Gerrit van der Veenstraat 34, 1077 ED Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

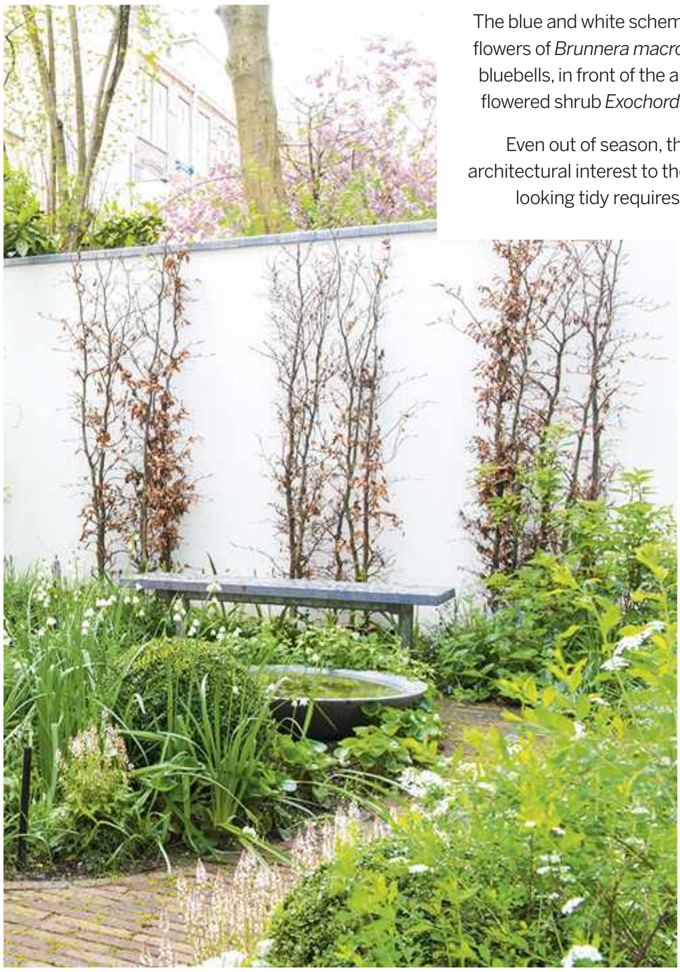
Tel +31 (0)20 671 6615/(0)651699476, carolienbarkman.nl

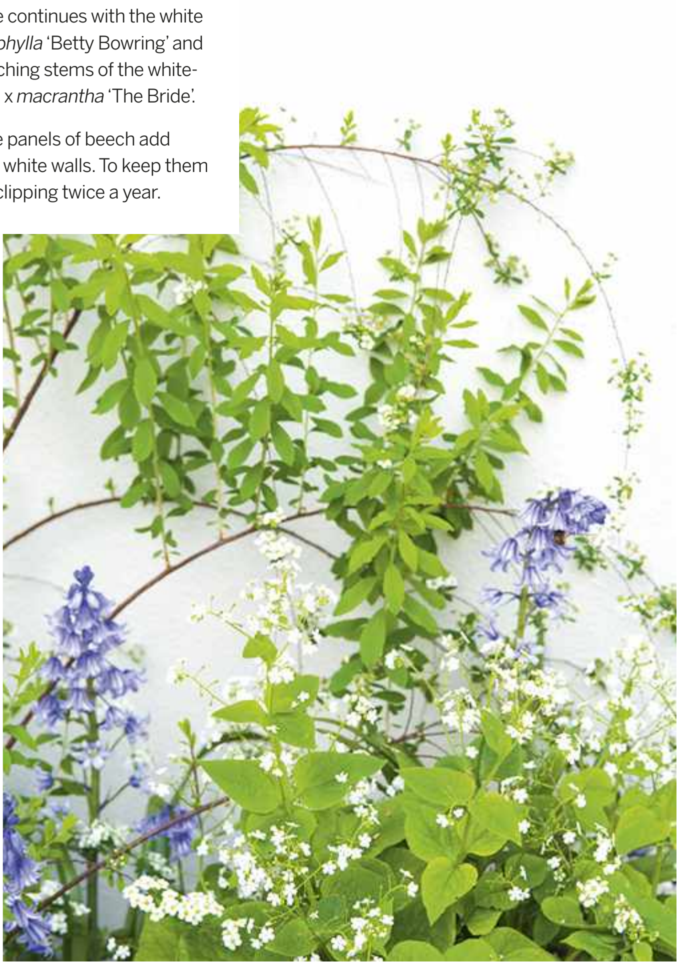
READER EVENT

Writer Noël Kingsbury will be speaking at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival in April. For details see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

In spring, the Spanish bluebell, *Hyacinthoides hispanica* 'Blue Queen', is paired with *Tiarella cordifolia* 'Oakleaf', which also provides lush foliage.

Amelanchiers are useful trees for a small garden. This *Amelanchier* x *grandiflora* 'Robin Hill' is an unusually upright form.

The blue and white scheme continues with the white flowers of *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Betty Bowring' and bluebells, in front of the arching stems of the white-flowered shrub *Exochorda* x *macrantha* 'The Bride'.

Even out of season, the panels of beech add architectural interest to the white walls. To keep them looking tidy requires clipping twice a year.

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UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

GARDEN SHOW

Eastern promise

The second Hokkaido Garden Show will take place across three venues on Japan's northernmost island from May to October. This year's venues are the alpine flower gardens of Daisetsu Mountains, the plains garden of Ueno Farm (home of leading designer Sayuki Ueno) and Daisetsu Mori-no Garden where the six competition gardens and three designers gardens, including the Kenzo Makino floral ski jump (pictured), will be on display. From 30 May until 4 October. **hgs.co.jp/en**

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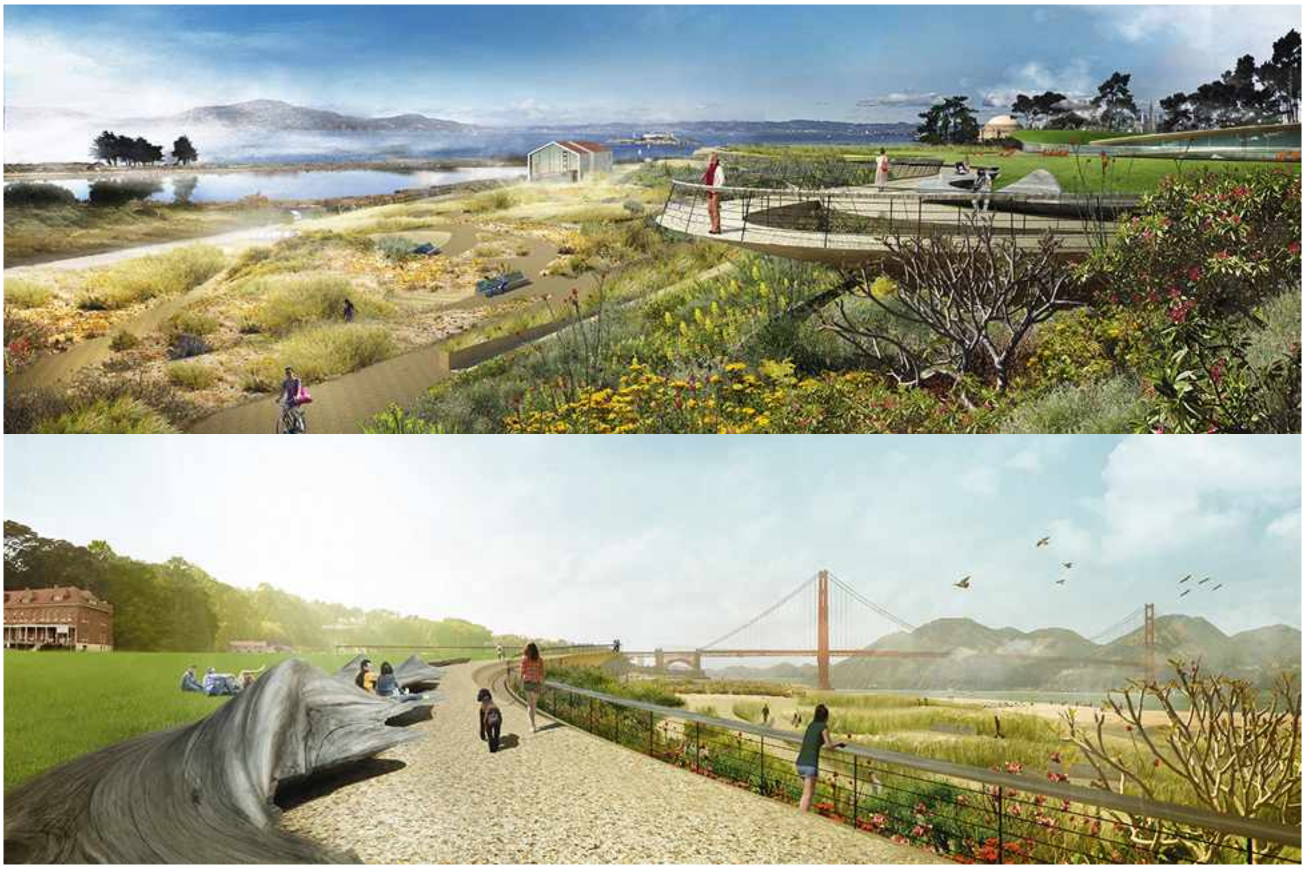


NEW PARK

Golden opportunity

Landscape architect studio James Corner Field Operations has won a competition to create a new 13-acre park bordering San Francisco's iconic Golden Gate Bridge. Presidio Parkway will connect the historic areas of Main Post and Crissy Field, and will include a series of beach ridges that curve over the tunnelled road, creating spaces for people to gather, be entertained and enjoy the views across the bay to Alcatraz island. James Corner Field Operations, in collaboration with Diller Scofidio + Renfro, is the design team behind New York's celebrated High Line. The new park is expected to be completed in 2018.

EXHIBITION

The big picture

'Henry Moore: Back to a Land,' a major exhibition of more than 120 of the Yorkshire artist's work, opens this month at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. It includes such well-known monumental sculptures as *Large Two Forms* (1966-69), shown above, and *Large Reclining Figure* (1984), as well as maquettes and drawings that will be displayed in the Underground Gallery.
7 March – 6 September; **ysp.co.uk**

BRIMMING WITH STYLE

Water butts aren't always the most stylish garden item, but this hand-crafted, galvanised steel butt from Arthur Jack is elegant enough to stand in full view on a terrace or at the front of a house. It comes with a brushed chrome tap and holds more than 300 litres. A galvanised plinth and grill to protect against falling leaves are extra. 90cm high, 60cm square; £495. Tel 01299 827059; arthurjack.co.uk

PRESIDO PARK ©JAMES CORNER FIELD OPERATIONS; HENRY MOORE, *LARGE TWO FORMS*, 1966-69, PHOTO: JONTY WILDE (2013) REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION

NEW PARK

Eastside story

Eastside City Park, Birmingham's first new park in 130 years, has won the 2014 Landscape Institute Award for best Medium Scale Development. Designed by Patel Taylor and Allain Provost (the team behind the Thames Barrier Park), the park includes two formal lawns linked by a paved promenade, which is framed by a series of steel pergolas clad in wisteria. Sculptural lighting towers are faced with leaf-patterned panels, and there's also a 190m-long water feature with crossing points.

PLANE AND SIMPLE

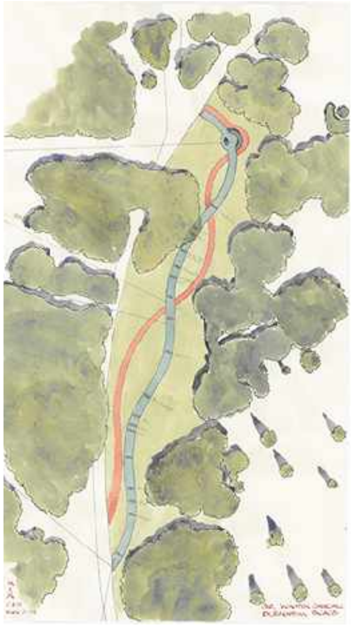
Peter Murray, aka the Artful Bodger, is running a two-day workshop on green woodworking skills at Arne Maynard's Monmouthshire home (30 April – 1 May). Peter, who won Young Craftsman of the Year in 2012, uses traditional tools and techniques to create beautiful chairs and stools.

For course details visit **arnemaynard.com**. Find out more on Peter's work at **theartfulbodger.co.uk** or call **07531 433987**.

MEMORIAL GARDEN

In Churchill's steps

To mark the 50th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's death, his birthplace Blenheim Palace is to open a memorial garden in June. Designed by Kim Wilkie, the garden features a brick pathway, beginning at the Temple of Diana (above), along which key milestones in Churchill's life are celebrated, and a flowerbed planted with bands of snowdrops, poppies, cornflowers and coreopsis. **blenheimpalace.com**



Notebook

- Speakers for this year's **SGD Spring Conference** on the role of grasses in planting design today include Noël Kingsbury, Neil Lucas, Sarah Price and Brita von Schoenaich. 21 March, Royal Geographical Society, London. To book call 01989 566695 or visit sgd.org.uk
- At Gravetye Manor **designer Anthony Noel** gives a talk on 'Big Ideas in Small Spaces' on 12 March. On 12 May, head gardener at Barnsley House in the Cotswolds, Richard Gatenby, will explain how he adheres to the design principles of Rosemary Verey. £55 each talk, including lunch with wine. Tel 01342 810567; gravetyemanor.co.uk
- *Gardens Illustrated* contributor **Derry Watkins** will reveal how she and her husband carved their beautiful garden near Bath out of fields of clay, in a lecture at West Dean College on 21 March, £71. Tel 0844 4994408; www.westdean.org.uk
- Discover the works of **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** in a series of short talks by RIBA curators and free Friday tours to accompany the Mackintosh Architecture exhibition at The Architectural Gallery, RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London. 27 March – 22 May (not Good Friday), architecture.com
- An e-learning course on how to practise **water conservation in the garden** and wider landscape is now available at htalearning.org.uk (introductory price £10 plus VAT until mid July 2015).

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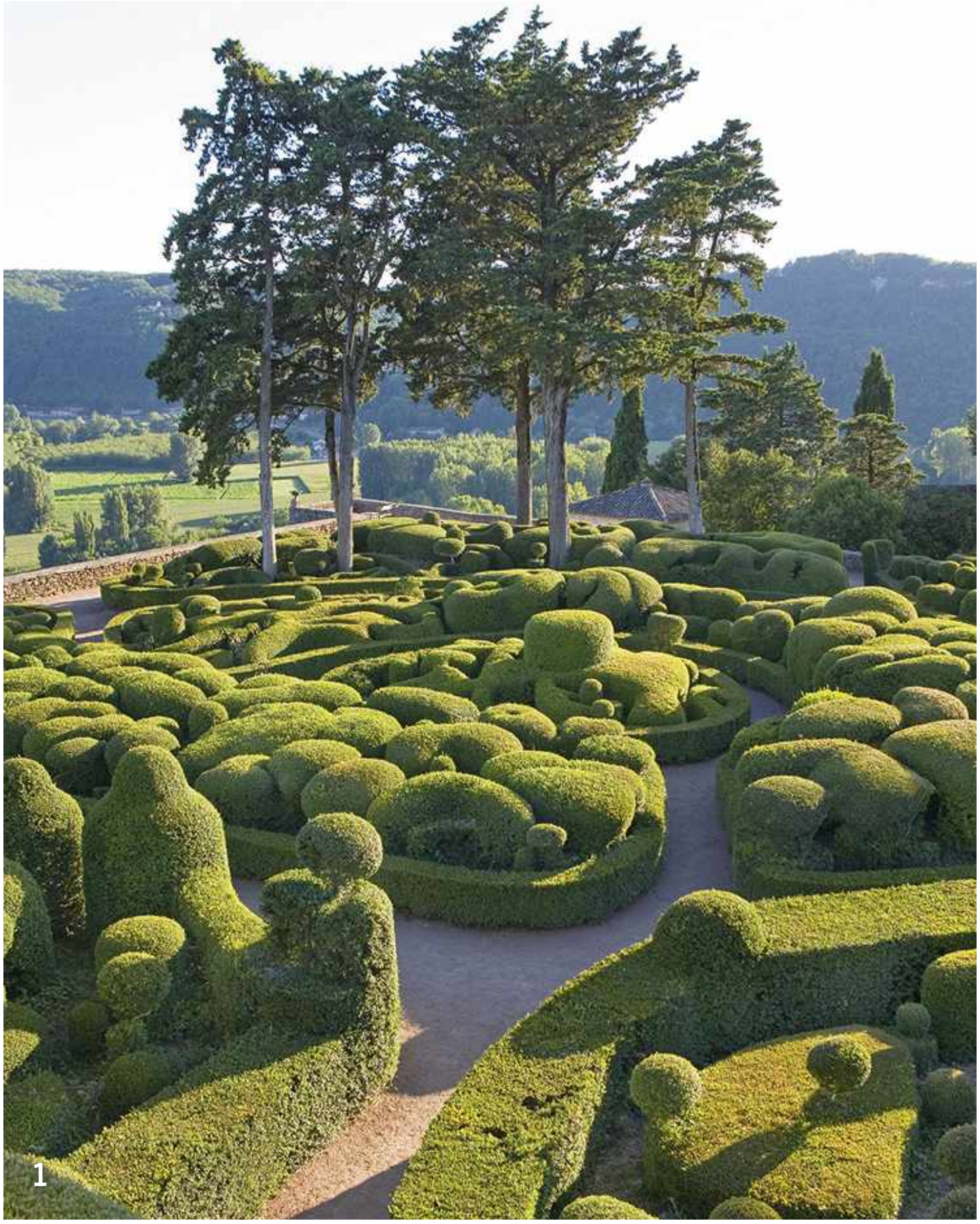
1 French dressing

The extraordinary gardens at Château de Marqueyssac take the art of topiary to new heights. Situated high on a hilltop overlooking the Dordogne valley, the garden contains more than 150,000 hand-pruned *Buxus sempervirens* shrubs, spread over 11 acres of terrace gardens.



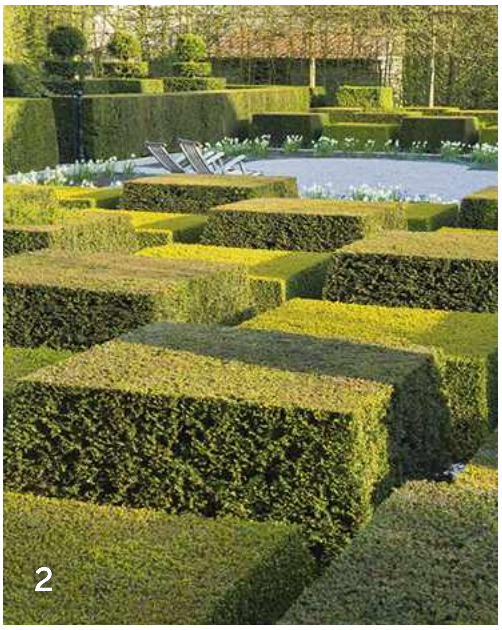
GAP PHOTOS/PERNILLA BERGDAHL

Annie Guilfoyle is Director of Garden Design at KLC School of Design. She is also Garden Course Co-ordinator at West Dean College and runs her own garden design studio.

Thinking outside the box

If box balls and bay pyramids are all that spring to mind when you think of topiary, then it's high time to sharpen your shears and think again

WORDS ANNIE GUILFOYLE



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2 MARIANNE MAJERUS; 3 GAP PHOTOS/CHARLES HAWES; 4 JASON INGRAM

2 Simplicity

Belgian landscape designer Chris Ghyselen has created a simple and contemporary topiary garden featuring large rectangles of box. Set at varying heights, the clipped box forms strong shadows and interesting lines. It will provide interest throughout the year and look quite different as the light changes throughout the day.

3 Dancing designs

The glorious gardens of Chatsworth House in Derbyshire are well known for several features, including the magnificent water cascade. However, this row of clipped *Taxus baccata* Aurea Group adds a humorous touch to the landscape. They have been allowed to grow at jaunty angles and look almost like wavering human forms.

4 Organic shapes

A large, clipped collar of *Buxus sempervirens* surrounds this majestic tree at Stavordale Priory in Somerset. Topiary specialist Jake Hobson of Niwaki now maintains this unusual sculptural piece.

Topiary is the art of training and pruning plants into a shape or form they would not naturally grow. It's a practice that dates back millennia. We know that the ancient Romans used to clip box (*Buxus sempervirens*) into animal shapes, human figures and even letters depicting the name of the garden owner. However, the Romans were probably not the first people to practice topiary; it may have begun even earlier in some Mediterranean or Asian cultures.

Although its exact origins are unknown, there is evidence that topiary has been used in almost every historical garden period since ancient Rome, which is quite extraordinary. This specialised pruning practice has never lost its appeal and remains as popular today as ever. Topiary is often associated with traditional or formal gardens but delve a little deeper and you will soon discover that there are lots of innovative and contemporary ideas for shaping and training plants.

Aside from adding a purely decorative or whimsical element to the garden, topiary works well as a focal point or to define areas within a garden. Clipped cubes, columns or domes can be positioned within areas of planting and borders, to create contrast, add structure and provide scale. They can also be used to add definition to a winter garden. For a dramatic effect, quantity is crucial, ▷

5 Theatricality

This wonderfully theatrical garden in Kent was designed and created by the garden owner Charlotte Molesworth. The imaginative topiary shapes not only give the garden a sense of fun, but also add year-round interest.

6 Hedging your bets

With the threat of box blight becoming more prevalent, *Ilex crenata* is stealing the stage when it comes to topiary. Neat, evergreen leaves similar to box are easy to clip and shape. Ilex will grow in a wide variety of soils and situations making it very desirable for creative topiary.

7 Bronze beauty

While evergreen shrubs may seem like the obvious choice for clipping and pruning, deciduous shrubs, such as *Fagus sylvatica*, are excellent contenders. Here at Broughton Grange in Oxfordshire the beech columns are in full winter glory retaining their brown leaves from the previous season, providing excellent contrast to rich, dark evergreens.

5

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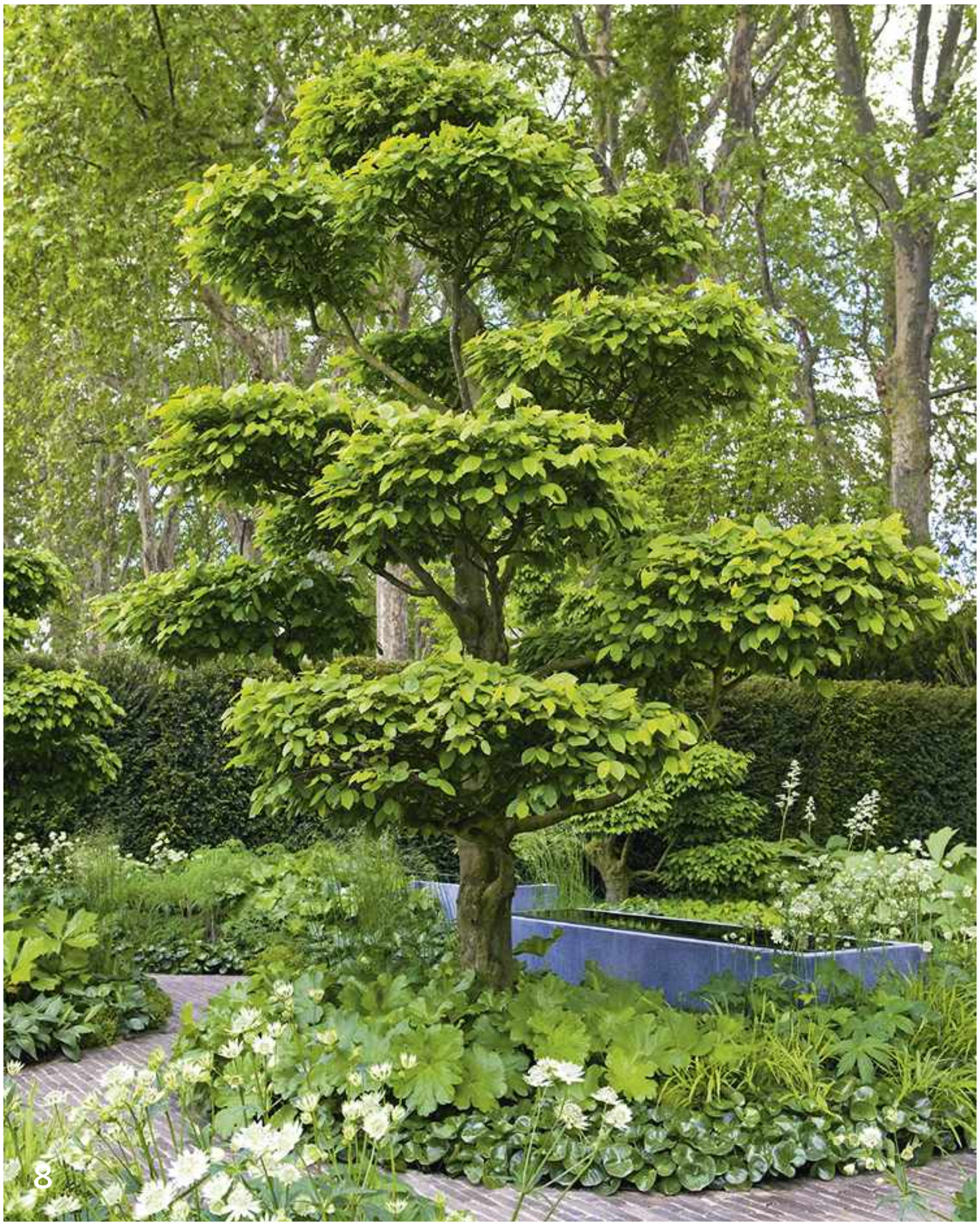
5 MMGI / BENNET SMITH – DESIGN: CHARLOTTE MOLESWORTH; 6 GAP PHOTOS/LEIGH CLAPP; 7 GAP PHOTOS/ABIGAIL REX

▷ as demonstrated in the Topiary Lawn at Great Dixter, in East Sussex. Here several large *Taxus baccata* appear to float above the wild flower meadow. They cast long, lingering shadows across the garden in late afternoon, adding yet another dimension to this extremely magical place.

When you're choosing plant material to shape, it's best to look beyond traditional box and bay; it is even possible to venture away from using evergreens. The outline shape formed by a deciduous shrub in winter could be almost as interesting as when covered in leaves during spring and summer. Shrubs, such as forsythia and lavender, can be clipped into fabulous flowery forms, but you do need to pay careful attention to the timing of when you prune plants. If you prune at the wrong point in the year, you may inhibit the flowering and lose the colourful, dramatic effect you have set out to create.

Some people are becoming reluctant to use box especially if they have previously encountered the fungal disease box blight (*Cylindrocladium buxicola* or *Pseudonectria buxi*). If you know there has been evidence of box blight in your area, you may wish to consider using an alternative plant. Plants with finely textured, small leaves, such as berberis, hebe, yew and lavender, tend to work best. Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) makes a very



GAP PHOTOS/MICHAEL HOWES – DESIGN: TOM STUART-SMITH

8 Cloud nine

Tom Stuart-Smith's 2008 Chelsea show garden designed for Laurent-Perrier, featured these elegant cloud pruned *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam). When cloud pruning a deciduous shrub, such as beech or hornbeam, you should try not to cut through the leaves. This creates a looser, more relaxed look and the leaves will not brown.

fine substitute for box; it's slow growing, glossy leaved and compact. And, although its leaves are extremely finely toothed, it can easily be mistaken for box at first glance.

Ilex crenata is one of the most commonly used plants for 'cloud pruning', a term used to describe shaping a shrub into a series of rounded spheres to resemble clouds or large green pom-poms. Cloud pruning is growing in popularity and has been championed by pruning expert Jake Hobson and his company Niwaki (which is Japanese for garden tree). Jake, who trained in Japan, calls his style organic topiary, and is particularly interested in the idea of the garden as a landscape and using topiary to define it, whether it's cloud pruning, formal topiary or authentic Japanese niwaki – or a fusion of all three. His advice for anyone thinking of giving topiary a go is: "Have a plan, but don't be afraid to change or develop your plan as the plant grows, or as you and your garden change."

In my humble opinion it's now time to take hedge shaping to a new dimension. I think we've seen enough of the wavy hedges popularised by Piet Oudolf (long since removed from his own garden at Hummelo). The most innovative hedges I have seen for a long time are those at Marchants Hardy Plants Nursery in East Sussex, where nursery owner Graham Gough has created ▷

9 Cutting edge

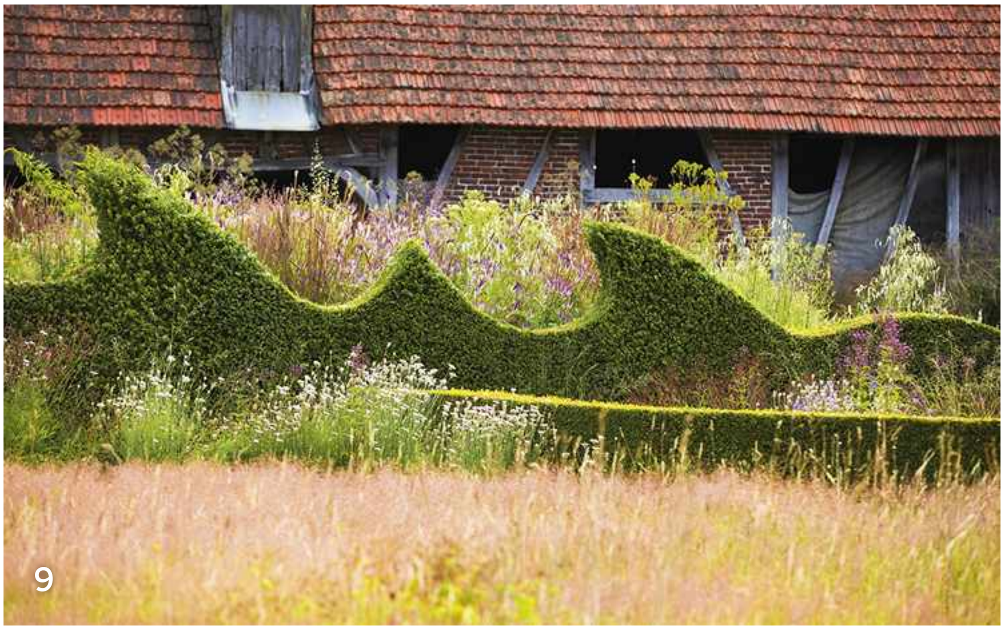
A sense of humour is such an important element in any garden and this wave-like hedge adds a comic touch to Le Jardin Plume in Normandy. Creative curves also act as a foil to the tall, airy perennials and grasses that move and sway in the garden on either side.

10 Crowning glory

Marchants Hardy Plants in East Sussex is not only a marvellous nursery and an important destination for plant hunters but the garden is also full of inspiring ideas. Various shrubs and hedges are pruned in imaginative ways, such as this box where the top has been allowed to remain shaggy.

11 Curious conifers

Cloud pruning conifers is a really good way to keep them in check and at the same time provide an unusual green wall. The marvellous thing about topiary and cloud pruning is that you can experiment and let the plant shape be a guide to the way you create your design.



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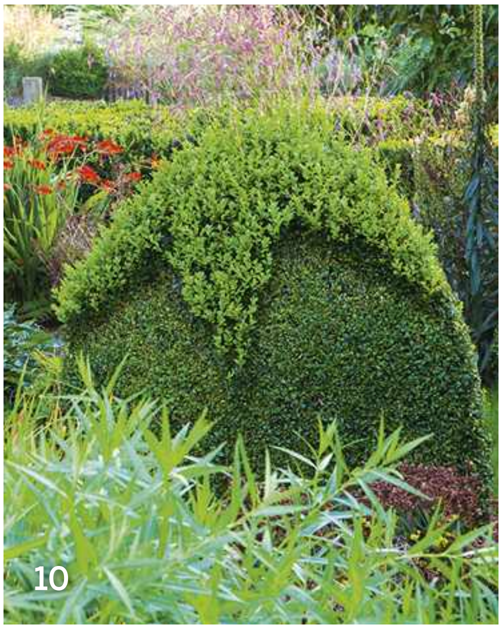

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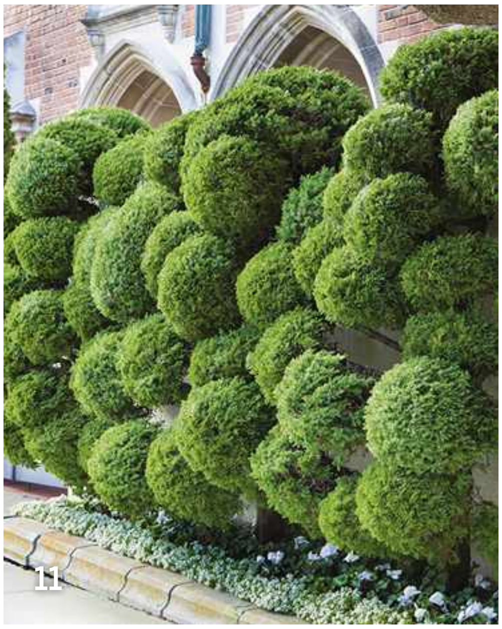


11

9 GAP PHOTOS/CHARLES HAWES; 10 MARIANNE MAJERUS, MARCHANTS HARDY PLANTS, EAST SUSSEX / GRAHAM GOUGH; 11 MARIANNE MAJERUS, SAN FRANCISCO, USA

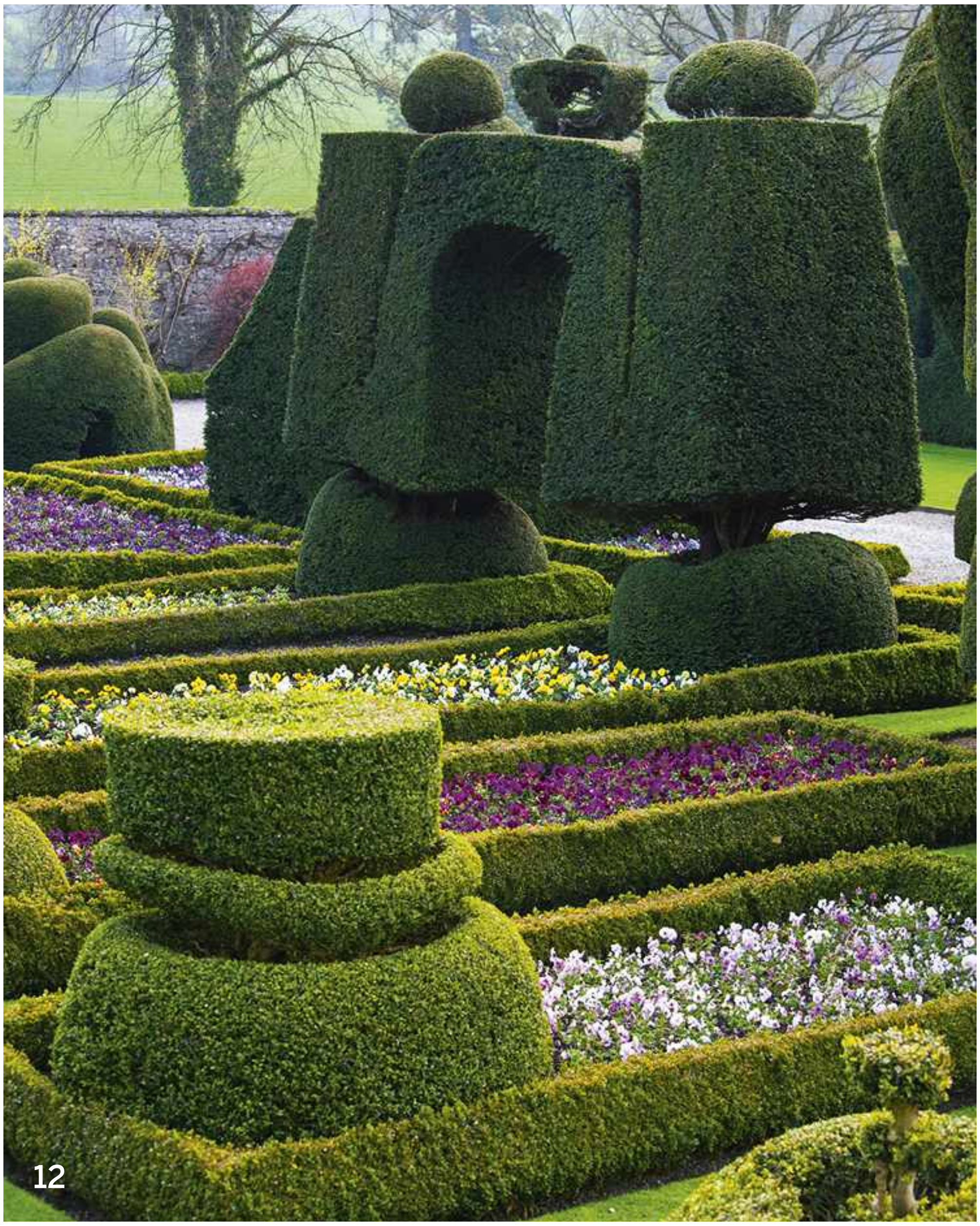
READER EVENT
Annie Guilfoyle will be explaining how to overcome the challenges of designing a small garden at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival in April. As part of the festival, held in the Cotswold town of Malmesbury, we are hosting tours of nearby Abbey House Gardens, famed for its topiary. For details of talks and tours see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

▷ interesting and unusual hedges to border the gardens. Asymmetrical, organically shaped box gives the garden great character and will no doubt develop from year to year (see image 10).

Perhaps the time has now come to move away from traditional topiary shapes and be far more adventurous? Leading garden designer Cleve West is now using topiary as an abstract art form and creating shapes that derive from his imagination. “I like all forms of topiary,” admits Cleve, “but lately I’ve been drawn to more abstract, organic and even surreal forms. Used wisely, topiary can lend structure, harmony, rhythm, scale, humour, direction, emphasis, narrative, atmosphere, mystery, frivolity and focus. Used badly, it can ruin a garden.”

If you want to have the look of topiary-shaped shrubs without the bother of clipping; then there are many rounded shrubs that provide the topiary effect and you don’t need to worry about when or how to trim them. *Hebe topiaria*, *Viburnum davidii*, *Santolina rosmarinifolia* and *Pittosporum tenuifolium* ‘Tom Thumb’ are all well worth considering. Take a look at these – you never know it may even encourage you to get the shears out and try for yourself. ☐

NEXT MONTH Creating a cohesive design.



RACHEL WARNE

12 Through the looking glass

Levens Hall in Cumbria is one of the oldest and finest topiary gardens in world. The garden was laid out in the 1690s and many of the large topiary shapes are more than 300 years old. Particularly famous are the King and Queen chess pieces and a Judge's Wig (shown left).

Further reading

- *The Art of Creative Pruning: Inventive ideas for training and shaping trees and shrubs* by Jake Hobson (Timber Press, 2011).
- *A Practical Guide to Topiary* by Jenny Hendy (Southwater, 2012).
- *Topiary and the Art of Training Plants* by David Joyce (Firefly Books, 2000).
- *Topiary Basics: The Art of Shaping Plants in Gardens and Containers* by Margherita Lombardii and Cristiana Serra Zanetti (Sterling, 1999).
- *Topiary Design and Technique* by Christopher Crowder and Michaeljon Ashworth (The Crowood Press, 2006).

Find out more

Where to see

- **Abbey Gardens**, Malmesbury, Wiltshire
- **Alnwick Garden**, Northumberland
- **Biddulph Grange**, Staffordshire
- **Blickling Hall**, Norfolk
- **Chastleton House**, Oxfordshire
- **Hatfield House**, Hertfordshire
- **Hidcote Manor**, Gloucestershire
- **Levens Hall**, Cumbria
- **Lytes Cary Manor**, Somerset
- **Packwood House**, Warwickshire
- **West Green House**, Hampshire

Suppliers

- **burgonandball.com** Sells wire frames for training topiary.
- **crowntopiary.co.uk** Nursery specialising in topiary, based in Hertfordshire.
- **niwaki.com** Run by Jake Hobson, one of the UK's leading experts in topiary, Niwaki sells top-quality equipment for the pruning and training of plants.
- **romantic-garden-nursery.co.uk** Specialist nursery with large range of topiary, mature shrubs and trees.

Useful websites

- **ebts.org** The European Boxwood and Topiary Society. Useful website for finding out more about topiary around the world
- **topiaryintheuk.co.uk** A county-by-county guide of gardens to visit.
- **topiary.org.uk** International association of topiary growers and suppliers. Lots of useful information on all aspects of topiary.

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Tina 613 pruning knife, £72.99, Great Dixter Shop, 01797 254047, greatdixtershop.co.uk

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Downtools

Book reviews, competition, crossword, back issues

These large, blue Himalayan poppies (*Meconopsis grandis*), which mingle here with aquilegias and *Allium stipitatum* ‘Mount Everest’, are one the passions of Rosanna James whose garden, Sleightholmedale in Yorkshire, is featured in *First Ladies of Gardening*, reviewed on page 97.

MARIANNE MAJERUS

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RICHARD III

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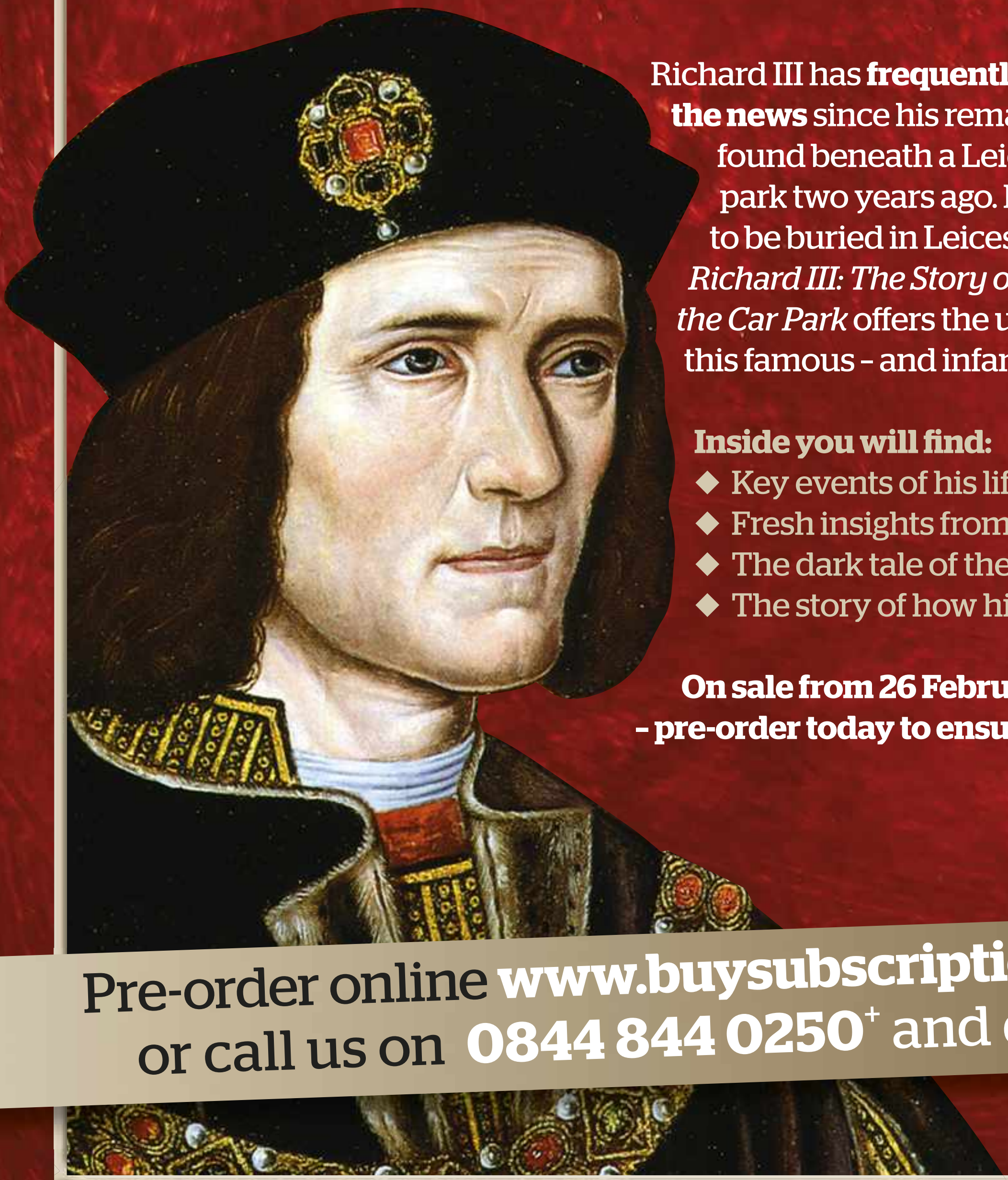

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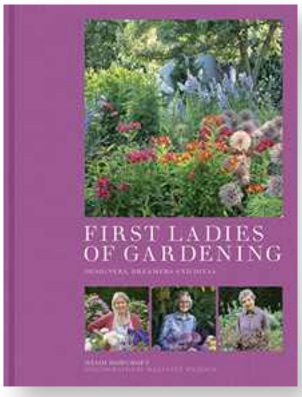

FIRST LADIES OF GARDENING

by Heidi Howcroft,
photography by
Marianne Majerus

Frances Lincoln, £20
ISBN 978-0711236431

A celebration of late 20th-century English gardens and their female creators, and the gardening skills needed to care for them.

Reviewer Paula McWaters is a gardening writer and editor.

In the foreword, author and photographer acknowledge that they didn't set out to find 'first ladies of gardening' but gathered them by default when they realised that so many of the late 20th-century gardens on their shortlist of favourites happened to have been created and maintained by women.

Fourteen women have been chosen: one half of the book is peopled with obvious contenders, such as Gertrude Jekyll, Vita Sackville-West, Beth Chatto and Mary Keen, and the other half introduces women of recent influence, Xa Tollemache at Helmingham Hall and Helen Dillon in Dublin, with some less familiar names. By no means will all readers agree these are 'the 14 most important lady gardeners of the last 100 years', but there is much to appreciate and learn from their beautifully photographed gardens.

Taking us on a detailed guided tour of each garden, the author fleshes out the themes and values that define each of their creators, taking pains to acknowledge the organisational skills and traditional working methods that go into making great gardens. Family connections are explored, such as the three generations who have created the lovely Sleightholmedale in Yorkshire and the quietly toiling husbands such as Margery Fish's Walter.

A particularly enjoyable chapter is 'Miss Havergal's Girls' about the influential and rigorous Waterperry School of Horticulture, a kind of finishing school for female gardeners, which turned out many highly qualified and gifted students. The gardens at Waterperry remain an inspiration.

One guiding principle to take from the book comes from the Sissinghurst chapter: 'A good gardener never stops learning. Vita did not think of herself as an expert, was modest about her achievements and, above all, never shirked hard work.'

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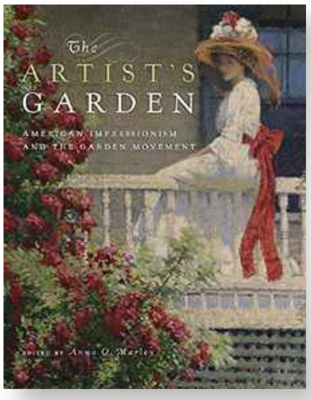

THE ARTIST'S GARDEN, AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM AND THE GARDEN MOVEMENT

edited by Anna O Marley

University of Pennsylvania Press, £29.50
ISBN 978-0812246650

A scholarly but easily accessible work that looks at the connections between American impressionism and the garden movement.

Reviewer Noël Kingsbury is a writer and plantsman.

In 1907, landscape architect Beatrix Farrand wrote an article urging American gardeners to learn from the impressionists' use of colour and light. She was speaking to an audience that by this time had had considerable opportunity to appreciate the connections between painting and garden making – the best-known American painter in the impressionist mould, Childe Hassam, had been producing flower-spattered garden images for some two decades.

The title conjures up images of romantic, informal gardens inspired by colourful, light-soaked paintings. This book is, however, about a great deal more. It also has considerably more insight and is far more controversial than might be first guessed. It covers the period at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century when the rapidly expanding American middle class began to develop its own style of gardening, heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. For the first time, beautiful gardens were being made by their owners, not by hired staff.

Essays by seven contributors cover American artists and their own gardening, the use of wild flowers, the growth of mass-circulation lifestyle magazines – many of which included garden pages in brash colours, the depiction of public parks and the importance of women landscape designers. A strong theme is that garden making was closely linked to the self-awareness of a middle class alienated both from the immensely wealthy 'robber barons' and the industrial city. Part of this was the discovery of a new American patriotism, expressed through a fashion for growing native plants. The tone is occasionally academic, but very readable – one of those rare books that considers garden making in its cultural, social and political context.

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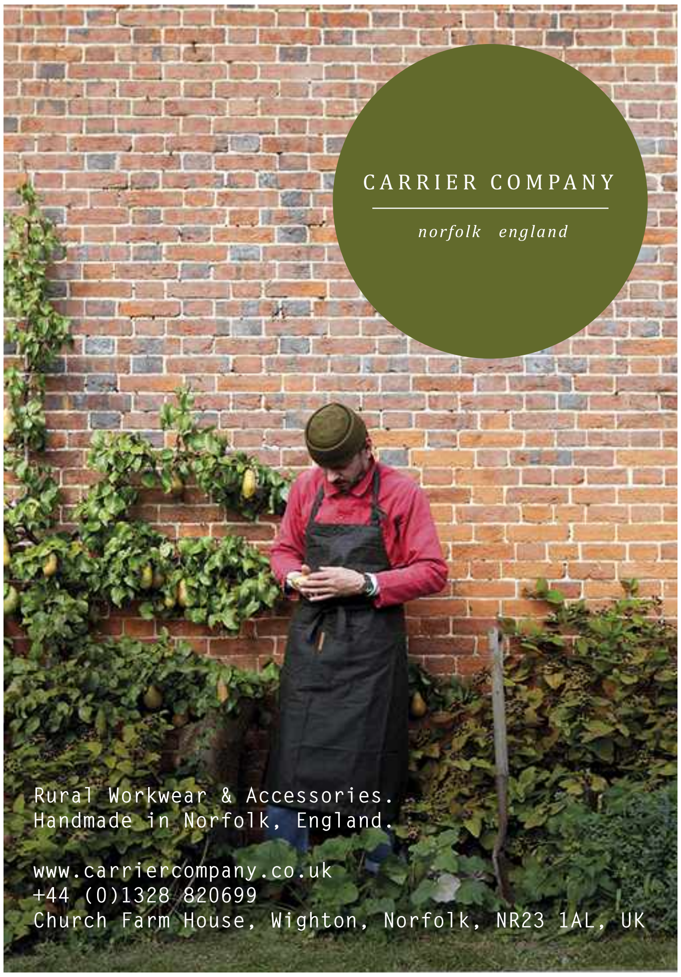

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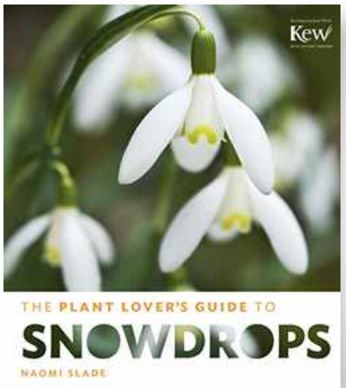

THE PLANT LOVER'S GUIDE TO SNOWDROPS

by Naomi Slade

Timber Press in association with Kew, £17.99
ISBN 978-1604694352

An authoritative and well-illustrated monograph covering the tiny winter flowers that spark such passion.

Reviewer Stephanie Donaldson is a garden writer.

Naomi Slade has had a bit of a thing about snowdrops since childhood when she marked Valentine's Day by venturing down to the bottom of the garden to pick a posy to give to her mother. Her enduring love of snowdrops shines through in her writing and it's rare that a monograph is as entertaining a read as this book.

Dedicated galanthophiles are already well catered for with the definitive *Snowdrops: A Monograph of Cultivated Galanthus* co-authored by three luminaries of the world of snowdrops, Matt Bishop, John Grimshaw and Aaron Davis. This book is for the rest of us – who are interested rather than obsessed – and would like someone to guide us through the basics of cultivation and advise us on which cultivars are the easiest to grow.

There's loads of good practical advice explained in a very accessible way. For example, there is the recommendation that snowdrops should be planted where you don't garden much – in other words not in a border where you are likely to disturb the dormant bulbs later in the year. It's also useful for beginners to know that growing them in containers is seldom successful unless they are cosseted.

Having thoroughly enthused us regarding the charms of the snowdrop, the 'Spotter's Guide' section is where temptation starts to beckon. Fortunately, the author steers away from the rarified treasures that dedicated galanthophiles obsess about and bases her selection on 'availability, charm, interest and personal taste'. This certainly worked for me as I unexpectedly found myself writing a list of six cultivars I didn't previously know I wanted. I just need to remember the quote from snowdrop specialist Joe Sharman 'if you want to be a galanthophile, get rich first!'

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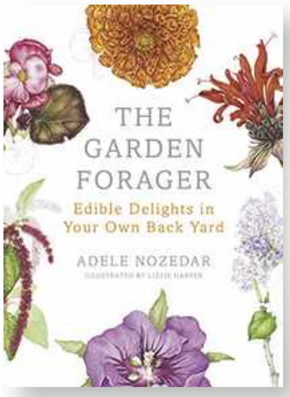

THE GARDEN FORAGER: EDIBLE DELIGHTS IN YOUR OWN BACK YARD

by Adele Nozedar, illustrations by Lizzie Harper

Square Peg, £12.99
ISBN 978-0224098892

A guide to more than 40 popular garden plants with culinary medicinal or even cosmetic potential.

Reviewer Andy Hamilton is a forager, writer and brewer.

I worry a little about recommending *The Garden Forager*; if I speak of it too favourably do I run the risk of unleashing a hoard of hungry mouths into the gardens of Britain? Will the 50 per cent of this country that live in the suburbs rise up and start to munch their way through their neighbours' prize blooms? But this is not my guilt to carry as with or without my recommendation I'm sure begonia's, Chinese dogwood, spiderwort and sedum will be on several dinner plates thanks to its author Adele Nozedar.

The book is a rare treasure and is as beautifully written as it is illustrated. It is easy to use as a reference too. Each plant is listed alphabetically using its common name, from amaranth to witch hazel. For those just starting out in gardening the botanical drawings with detailed descriptions will help.

But what I found a real joy was Adele's accompanying text. She gives each plant context and we are informed of the country of origin of the plants along with where they all sit, both historically and culturally. Anyone with a passing interest in herbal medicine will also benefit from reading about the medicinal uses of these 47 plants.

This is a foraging book and so it would not be complete without some recipes, which is what really roused my interest. As I read my mouth is watering looking at the culinary uses gathered from around the world. I sit awaiting next season imagining lilac pavlova, linden chocolate, rose petal and orange kulfi, and sunflower seed hummus all washed down with a spot of witch hazel tea or sumac lemonade.

It is not often I get as excited by a book as I have with *The Garden Forager* but I am struggling to find fault. Your amaranth, hostas and day lilies may be less impressed.

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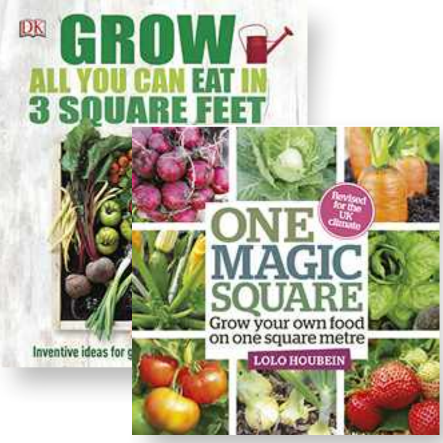
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ONE MAGIC SQUARE
by Lolo Houbein,
Green Books, £19.99.
ISBN 978-0857842800

Two books that examine the practicalities of growing a large volume of food in an extremely small space.

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is a garden writer and allotmenteer.

Here are two books very much covering similar ground, albeit one in metric and one in imperial measurements. The puzzle both are concerned with is this: most new gardeners who want to learn how to grow their own food are city dwellers, and so have little space. Both books conclude that the way forward is to teach them how to garden in one square metre/three square feet beds in an intensive way.

One Magic Square is an American book that has been adapted for the UK market and climate, and it does read as such, with slightly jarring juxtapositions of phrases such as 'Hardware for the Food Garden' up against observations on the British weather.

The book is extremely light on illustrations and the large majority of it is given over to dispensing basic gardening advice. Still, it contains some lovely ideas for the magic squares, a massive 36 in total, and Lolo Houbein's writing is easy and chatty.

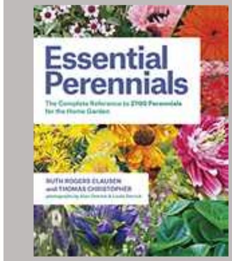
Grow All You Can Eat in 3 Square Feet is really the more satisfying of the pair. Although there are far fewer 'three-square feet' bed plans, each has been planted up and photographed through the season, and several pages are given over to discussing how to take the plan through a whole year. The reader is therefore reassured that the author has actually tried the plan and that it can work well (although said author doesn't seem to be acknowledged anywhere, despite credits for designers, indexers etc). The rest of the book is given over to lots of other ideas for growing in small spaces, such as attaching guttering to a wall and planting herb hanging baskets. Few readers could come away from this book thinking that they don't have enough space to grow food, and all would be well armed to get started.

Book offers

One Magic Square RRP £19.99. **Reader offer price £18.50.** *3 Square Feet* RRP £14.99. **Reader offer price £13.49** both including p&p.

Other books

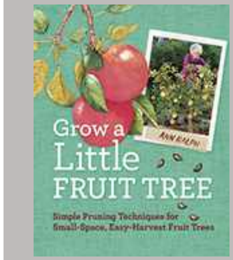
Whether you're short of ideas for designing your garden or perennials to plant, or simply short of space, help is at hand



ESSENTIAL PERENNIALS
by Ruth Rogers Clausen
and Thomas Christopher
Timber Press, £35
ISBN 978-1604693164

OFFER PRICE **£32.50**

A guide to more than 2,700 plants. Aimed at a US market, but with plenty of advice for UK readers.



GROW A LITTLE FRUIT TREE
by Ann Ralph
Storey, £11.99
ISBN 978-1612120546

OFFER PRICE **£10.99**

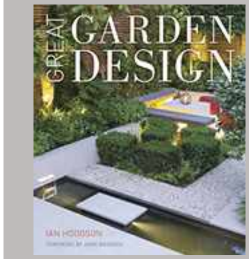
Another US title but with tips on keeping trees small for gardeners on both sides of the Atlantic.

Garden Design

GARDEN DESIGN: A BOOK OF IDEAS
by Heidi Howcroft and
Marianne Majerus
Firefly Books, £30
ISBN 978-1845339210

OFFER PRICE **£27**

An unmistakably beautiful book, with useful design ideas.



GREAT GARDEN DESIGN
by Ian Hodgson
Frances Lincoln, £25
ISBN 978-0711235731

OFFER PRICE **£23**

Some useful design solutions offered by members of the Society of Garden Designers. With forward by John Brookes.

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- For more information on the full range of Hayter mowers, visit **hayter.co.uk** or call **01279 603020**.

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Which type of mower was invented first?

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Enter online at gardensillustrated.com

Closing date 31 March 2015

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1 The promoter is Immediate Media Company Bristol. **2** Entrants must be UK residents aged 18 years or older, excluding the promoter's employees. **3** The closing date for entries is 11.59pm on 31 March 2015. Entries received after the closing date of the promotion will not be considered. **4** By entering the promotion, the participants agree to be bound by these terms and conditions; that their surname and county of residence may be released if they win a prize and that should they win the promotion, their name and likeness may be used by the Promoter for prearranged promotional purposes. **5** Entrants must supply to Immediate Media Company Limited their full name, email address and daytime telephone number. The Promoter will use entrants' personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy (www.immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy). **6** Only one entry will be permitted per person, regardless of method of entry. Bulk entries made by third parties will no be permitted. **7** The winning entrants will be the first two correct entries drawn at random from all the correct entries after the closing date. The draw is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winners will be notified within ten days of the close of the promotion by post/telephone/email. **8** There are two prizes of a Hayter Harrier 48 lawn mower. The prize will be delivered to the winners via the nearest Hayter supplier. **9** There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. The prize must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred. The Promoter reserves the right to substitute the prize with one of the same or greater value. **10** For details of the winner send an SAE to Immediate Media Company Bristol within two months of the closing date. **11** The Promoter does not accept any responsibility for lost, delayed or fraudulent entries. **12** If any of the winners is unable to be contacted within 30 days of the promotion's closing date, the Promoter reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner up, or to re-offer the prize in any future promotion. **13** The Promoter excludes liability to the full extent permitted by law for any loss, damage or injury occurring to the participant arising from his or her entry into the promotion or occurring to the winner arising from his or her acceptance of a prize. **14** The promotion is subject to the laws of England. **15** Immediate Media Company Limited (publishers of *Gardens Illustrated*) would love to keep you informed by post or telephone of special offers and promotions from the Immediate Media Company Group. Please write 'Do not contact: Immediate Media Co Ltd' if you would prefer not to receive these. *Gardens Illustrated* would like to keep you informed of newsletters, special offers and other promotions by email or text message. Please write your email address and mobile number on your postcard if you would like to receive these. You may unsubscribe from these at any time. Hayter would like to keep you informed by email, post or phone of their special offers and promotions. Please write 'Do not contact: Hayter' on your entry if you would prefer not to receive these.

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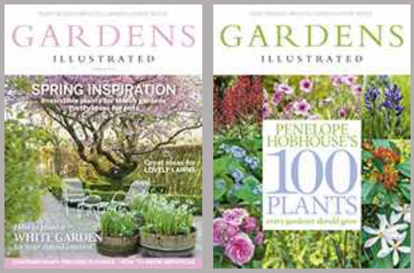

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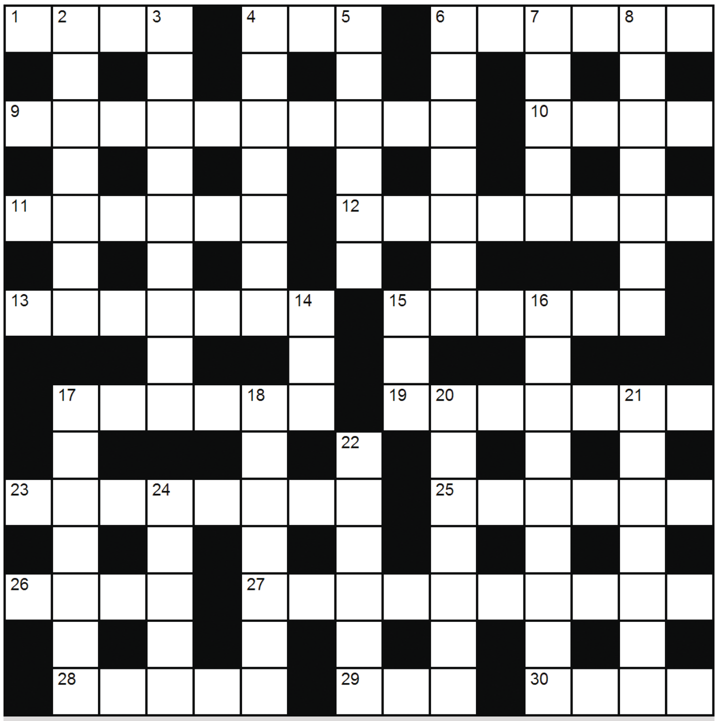

ACROSS
1 Pinch off stem's tip to prevent further growth (4)
4 Edible mushroom in sauce poivrade (3)
6 Intertwine hedge branches – left in cheap disarray (6)
9 Describes a plant with flower clusters (10)
10 Uncommon bit of flora replanted (4)
11 A deep pink fringed tulip provides an afternoon nap! (6)
12 Insect-trapping plant also called campion (8)
13 Crataegus – sort of er, meaty (3,4)
15 Swear a bistort includes the rock cress genus! (6)
17 Oddly likes to include Eric's last old grass-cutting tool (6)
19 A tall bearded iris – a well-known tragedy! (7)
23 Damage left by falling foliage (4-4)
25 Well, it's coming up to that time of year! (6)
26 Yours truly's in extremes of Laxton Superb bough (4)
27 An inflorescence – or half weed, perhaps (6,4)
28 Reaps anew a bit of asparagus (5)
29 Rich heavy soil initially for owner of Harlow Carr (3)
30 Pine wood – from a Kent resort? (4)

DOWN
2 *Saxifrage* member, aka 'Fringe Cups' – a millet variety (7)
3 Like mistletoe, Patricia's upset (9)
4 Dull, unimaginative person in vegetable garden? (7)
5 Pomegranate genus – cooked in a cup! (6)
6 One who puts seeds in the ground or an ornamental pot (7)
7 Soil found in footwear – thick (5)
8 Hazelnut genus – so curly, disorderly (7)
14 Regard – it's the central part of a petal's colouring (3)
15 Earlier bit of tarragon (3)
16 Flower mimicking a furry insect – ruining her bodice! (3,6)
17 A taxonomic grouping (7)
18 The devil of a white narcissus with an orange cup! (7)
20 Pendant inflorescences – unusual assets covering end of petal (7)
21 Partly transplant a nasturtium for the verbena genus (7)
22 Shady enclosure in the garden (6)
24 Coconut coir used eg for plant matting (5)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

FEBRUARY'S SOLUTIONS
ACROSS 5/7 Birds Foot Trefoil **8** Tilia **9** Anchusa **10** Express **11** Lobes **13** Crocosmia **15** Yew tree **18** Lily pad **20** Herb Paris **22** Swede **23** Spinach **25** Astelia **27** Avert **28/14** Paperbark maple.
DOWN 1 Eric **2** Mosaic **3** Sloe **4** Fatsia **5** Bramley **6** Slugs **8** Topsoil **12** Bower **16** Replant **17** Earth up **19** Dieback **20** Hostas **21** Swampy **22** Satyr **24** Itea **26** Loam.

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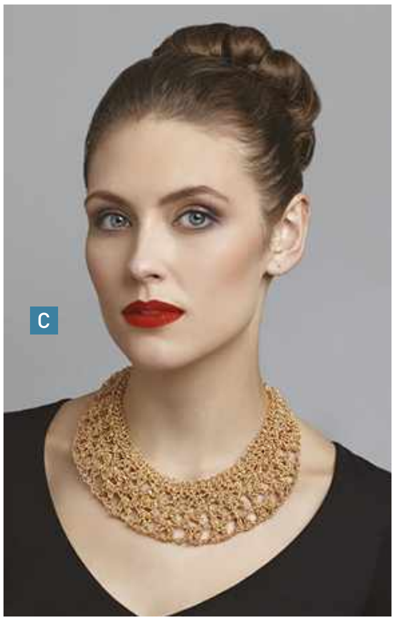

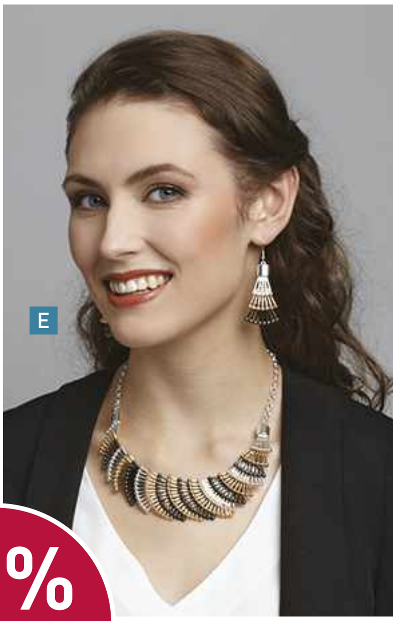

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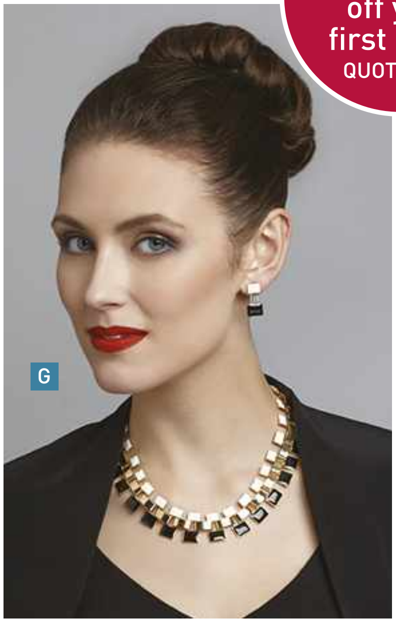

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ADDRESS **Bullers Way, Abbotsbury (nr Weymouth), Dorset DT3 4LA**
TEL **01305 871387**
WEB **abbotsburygardens.co.uk**

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WEB **blarneycastle.ie**

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ADDRESS **Bulls Cross, Enfield, Middlesex EN2 9HG**
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Photo: Simon Hadleigh-Sparks

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ADDRESS **Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9AS**
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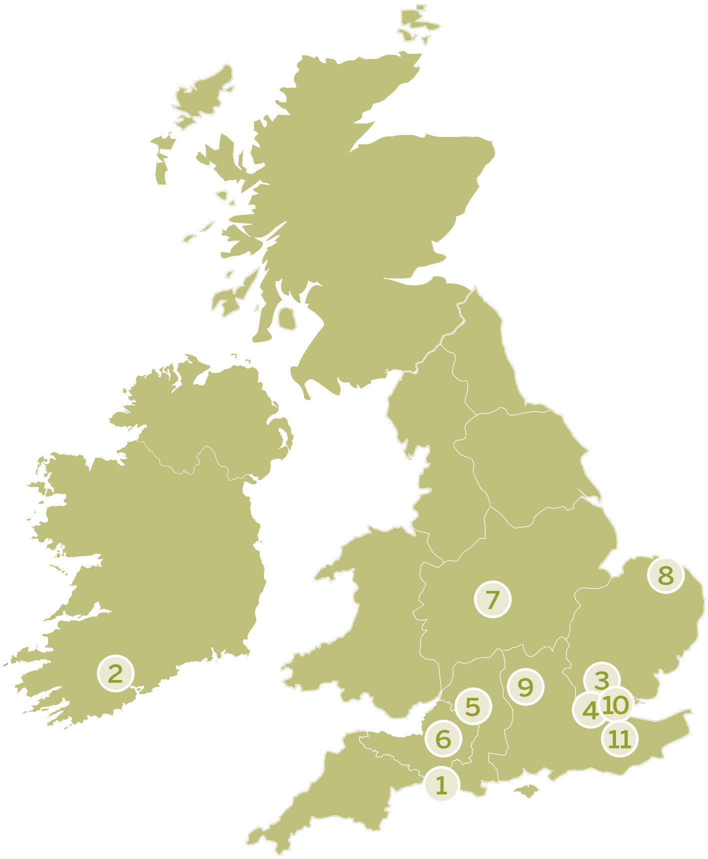

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TEL **020 8232 5050**
WEB **nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley**

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Spring is a wonderful time to view the gardens as spectacular carpets of snowdrops, crocus and daffodils welcome visitors. Walls are covered in camellias and tulips are in full bloom, as are the rhododendrons, azaleas and wisteria. Spring bedding includes hyacinths, wallflowers and pansies.

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TEL **01732 865224**
WEB **hevercastle.co.uk**

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TEL **01608 684416** WEB **whichfordpottery.com**

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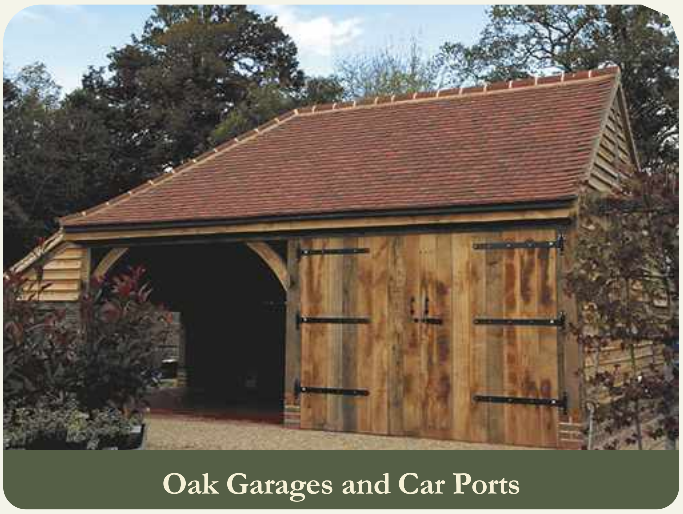

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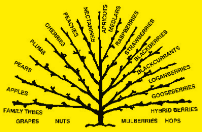

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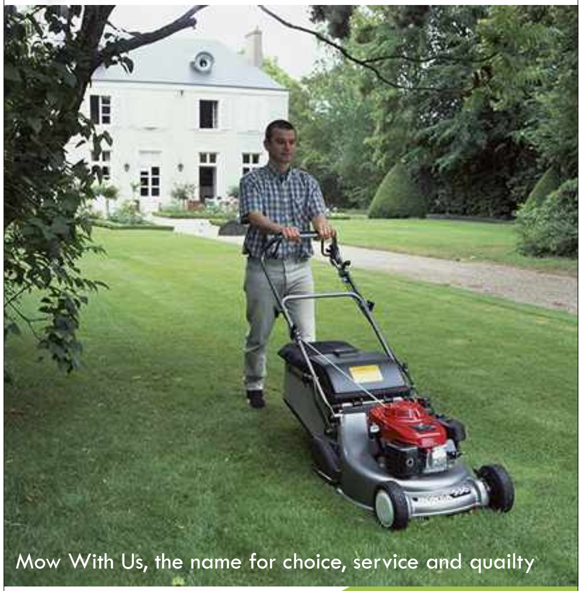

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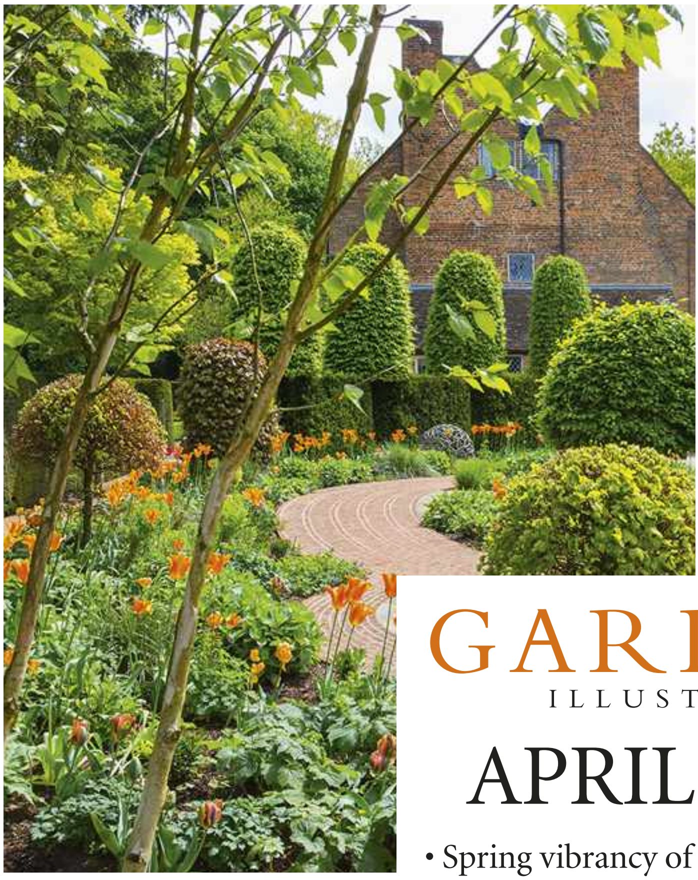

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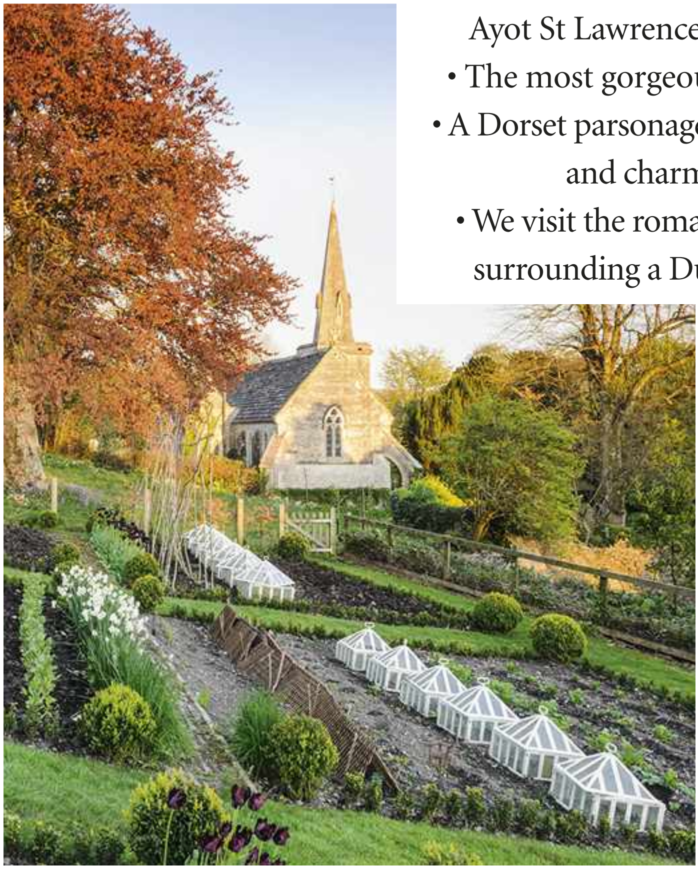
APRIL ISSUE

- Spring vibrancy of flower and foliage at Ayot St Lawrence in Hertfordshire
- The most gorgeous cherry blossoms
- A Dorset parsonage where productivity and charm combine
- We visit the romantic spring garden surrounding a Dutch farm cottage



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARIANNE MAJERUS, LYNN KEDDIE, MARIANNE MAJERUS, JASON INGRAM

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Border crossing

As winter turns into spring, Frank realises there's no time for procrastination

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **ANGELA HARDING**

Now I am away all winter I have my excuse for everything being such a mess, without having to admit I like it that way

Sometime this month the seasons collide and spring will tangle with winter, each falling over the other in the sort of shambles you get when the entrance and the exit is all the same door and the new lot want to come in while the old are still loitering in a vestibule paralysis. It is now that I envy my tidy friends, who for months have been gloating over the impeccably dug and weeded and mulched and manured, but not to the point of envying them the days of working out in the bitter rain that it took to achieve it.

And then again bare earth has never been my thing, and I'd sooner see the little blue things that herald spring appear snuggled among the debris of winter than have them displayed cold on sterile ground. And it is lovely to get on your knees as soon as the paths are dry and the stone a little warm and work your way gingerly into the border, making small discoveries along the way.

Now that I am away all the winter I have my excuse for everything being such a mess, without having to admit that I like it that way or pretend that I was doing it for the sake of the wildlife. At the same time, knowing that I am going to be away for long stretches is a spur to getting the essentials done. In the normal course of events I would have looked at a job like pruning a fruit tree and thought to myself that it must be done soon, while it was still the right season, and then there would be a distraction or a run of bad weather and the next thing I knew it would be the wrong season and the dilemma of whether to do it at the wrong time or leave it until the following year.

Now, whenever I am home, I look at things and know that if they are not done this minute it will be too late by the time I see them again. And so the mower came out on the one dry day in Christmas week to get the meadow down for the crocuses – a job that is intended every year but not always achieved. So now, in the meadow at least, there is no conflict of the seasons and the crocuses are showing in grass that is the right length to show them off.

In the same week I managed to get around most of the hellebores too and take the old leaves off. It was done early perhaps, but that is a job that is usually left too late and done in a rush and you accidentally snip off flower buds and new leaf buds. And you find that the collapsed old leaves have already squashed a delicate neighbouring reticulate iris or two and given shelter to the snail that was feeding off it in the meantime. I couldn't bear to think of all that happening in my absence, so rolling the Christmas pastry had to wait while I scurried round with secateurs in the drizzle.

The hardy ferns were stripped too, while I was at it, even though the fronds were still green and fresh looking, and then I had a nice time weaving fronds into a winter coat among the stems of the tree dahlia, which is now in a pot too big to be carried out of frost's way. When I get back the question will be when to remove the protection. Too soon and winter could riot yet; not soon enough and all that spring sunshine won't be able to get through to the soil and persuade the dahlia to resurrect.

We get a couple of warm days when we are out digging in short sleeves and forget that March can be the coldest month of the year. Or we get a blizzard and forget that this is spring and all of life is pushing beneath our feet. □

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

READER EVENT

Don't miss the chance to hear Frank discuss his thoughts on the great contradictions of creating a garden at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival in April. To find out how to book tickets see page 8 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

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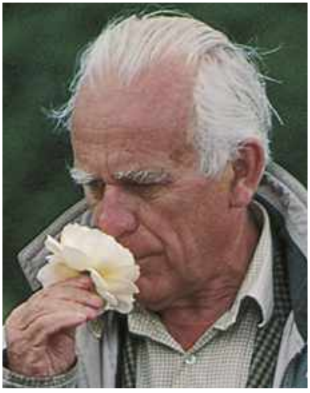

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